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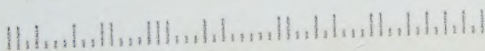
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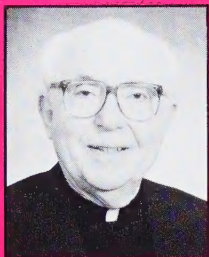
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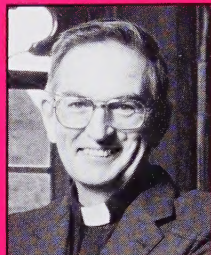
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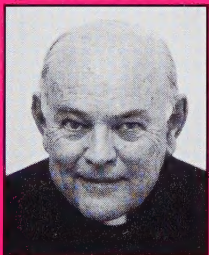
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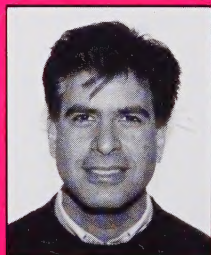
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HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

CONTENTS

5

HOW GREAT THOU ART

James Torrens, S.J.

7

READING, WRITING, AND LIVING SOULFULLY

Francis Dorff, O.Praem., S.T.D.

10

ONGOING RELIGIOUS FORMATION

Mary Kevin Rooney, A.S.C., M.A.Th.

12

THE MIND'S ROLE IN HEALING

Paul J. Bernadicou, S.J.

16

FOSTERING COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Carroll Juliano, S.H.C.J., Rosine Hammett, C.S.C., and Loughlan Sofield, S.T.

21

THE POWER OF COMPASSIONATE LOVE

Patrick J. McDonald, M.S.W.

25

STEPS TOWARD COMPLETING LIFE

Mary Elizabeth Kenel, Ph.D.

29

LEADING A FAITH-SHARING GROUP

Alfred J. Micallef, S.J., S.Th.D.

34

LIFE SATISFACTION BEGINS WITH TRUST

Elaine E. Swords

37

NO EASY TRANSITION FOR INTERNATIONAL SEMINARIANS

John C. Kemper, S.S., D.Min.

43

WE LIVE BY METAPHORS

Mary Jo Moran, H.M., Ph.D.

2

EDITORIAL BOARD

3

EDITOR'S PAGE

The World's Problems Challenge Us All

47

BOOK REVIEWS

The New Men: Inside the Vatican's Elite School for American Priests

By Brian Murphy

My Brother Joseph: The Spirit of a Cardinal and the Story of a Friendship

By Eugene Kennedy

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EDITOR'S PAGE

THE WORLD'S PROBLEMS CHALLENGE US ALL

American journalism is in precarious shape these days, especially the printed kind. Every daily newspaper published in a large metropolitan area is losing circulation, even as the region's population continues to grow. Some papers have already gone out of existence for financial reasons; others have reluctantly merged. It was inevitable that with round-the-clock news coverage increasingly available on television, radio, and the Internet, many people would decide to save money by canceling their newspaper subscriptions. Not so obvious, but still pertinent, is the fact that as Americans live longer and find their eyesight deteriorating, they are inclined to stop turning to the printed page for information they can conveniently access elsewhere.

Attempting to reverse their loss of subscribers, many publishers are giving their product a new face. Smaller pages, a less cluttered appearance, and liberal use of color photos are common signs of the newspaper redesign that is going on almost constantly these days. But it is doubtful that cosmetic changes will do the job. A greater cause for concern, I think, is that most young Americans, raised on television and now the Internet, are unlikely to become regular newspaper readers, no matter how attractively the content is packaged.

Another matter of concern is that, as recent surveys of students have shown, reports of day-to-day news events around the country and throughout the world are of little interest to the young because of their heaviness and alarming nature. The complex national or global problems that underlie so many current political, economic, and social happenings seem just too formidable to most kids. Even when some of them do become curious about large and serious issues, they wind up feeling frustrated and helpless, incapable of personally doing anything to

remedy the flawed situations they observe. Young people's natural idealism suffers a painful blow when they come to realize how impotent they are to solve the world's, nation's, or city's problems. They all too often turn away, denying that the issues are worthy of their attention.

But the task of growing up to be a maturely moral person entails eventually facing—and attaining a readiness to do something about—the starving North Koreans, the victims of the AIDS epidemic in Africa, the homeless in the streets of every big city, the multitudes of children being abused physically or sexually, and the awful poverty affecting a quarter of the world's population. Moreover, it's impossible to become a moral adult without overcoming the natural tendency to turn away from and ignore things that are painful to witness or that reveal one's personal powerlessness. Parents, educators, and others working with the young have an enormous responsibility: to keep inviting the young to look upon and respond to the unmet needs and violated rights of people, the sufferings that torment them, and the evils that victimize them. But how can we do this if we ourselves feel helpless to solve the world's monstrous problems, which seem to be always multiplying and becoming nearly incomprehensible?

There is a time-tested formula for developing the kind of adult who will look squarely at the gigantic problems of the world and have the courage and determination to work for a solution to them. We must first of all teach the person, as a child and adolescent, to pay attention to the plight of individuals in need and to *do something* to assist them. For a Christian, this means learning not to turn away from the one who is in urgent need of food, drink, clothing, a home, medical care, or emotional support. It also requires developing a habitual awareness that the Lord identifies himself with each and every person in need, and that on the day of judgment, one's reward or punishment will depend on how one responded to their distress (Matt. 25:31–46).

Only after acting alone to help solve people's problems on a relatively small scale can a young person learn to step up to more complex and difficult situations in which human needs are pleading for alleviation—for example, situations involving racial injustice, exploitation of workers, and sexual discrimination. The one-on-one approach to problem solving is out of the question in such circumstances. The person who will respond helpfully will have been taught to seek and find the collaboration of like-minded and resourceful people who are ready to undertake large and difficult projects and tasks. Today, perhaps more than at any other moment in history, nations, churches, and organizations need to find and develop team players who have the will to tackle "the big ones" that most people feel too small to take on.

What better season is there for thinking about

our call as Christians to respond to our brothers and sisters in need than this current one, when the church reminds us to fix our gaze on the cross? There we find the evidence of Jesus' loving decision to purchase through his suffering and death a needed forgiveness for each of us individually and a place in Paradise for us all. He models for us what is meant by laying down one's life so that others can live. We would do well to pray: *Teach us, Lord Jesus, to love and meet the needs of others as you have so courageously done for us, so that with you we may experience forever the joy of your resurrection. Amen.*



James J. Gill, S.J., M.D.
Editor-in-Chief

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How Great Thou Art

James Torrens, S.J.

how improbable, how strange
this heart
with its good morning
and a slight extra skip
you too
attending to our food list
starry with projects
how precious beyond weight
and measure
fleeting

how inconceivable
and beyond all grasp
that One
unglimpsed Self-Brightness
and immense
Great Spirit
should just
Ever Be

how full of mystery
beyond sky searching
far beyond equation
the burst of a tight kernel
magic seed
that set flying
dust, stars, globes
whose swirl of elements
composes us

how undreamed of
and how great a mercy
the coming of
a word for this
whom we can touch
drops of his blood
curative
and mid-winter sweetness

In the course of a student retreat a year ago, meditating between appointments with directees, I had one of those strange and unsettling moments—a strong sense of the unlikeliness and sheer mystery of my own being, of the universe, even of the deity. How did it all come to be? How can there be something and not nothing? How, for instance, an all-powerful, unoriginated and originating Spirit? How this bag of

bones, sitting or kneeling, eyes wide with wonder? How indeed.

Sitting and writing a little more calmly a year later, I do not find myself at all able to recapture such a moment of puzzlement, wonder, terror. Mercifully, those moments come and go. This poem, written at the time, will have to do. I will reflect, however, that those who dismiss believers and religious folks out of hand as credulous, wishful, shallow pollyannas have no idea. Also, I can see we owe more respect to the nonbeliever who has struggled and is struggling still.

The recent huge advances in knowledge of the universe most likely played into my experience. This past year, the orbiting Hubble telescope, once its focus was cleared, began sending us brilliantly colored and astounding views of the cataclysms and the nascent formations far out in space and far back in time. We can now say to the galaxies: No use your racing away from us; we can catch up!

The bold speculation about origins is also at white heat. I am not much of a television watcher, but I was glued to the five segments of *Stephen Hawking's Universe* on public television, especially the crucial part 2. That second hour of the series centers not just on Albert Einstein but especially on Father Georges Lemaître, the Belgian astronomer at Louvain University and the Vatican, who contended that the universe was expanding—as it were, blossoming—out of a primeval “big bang,” a first instant incredibly

creative. When the Bell Laboratories in New Jersey, investigating what seemed like static from satellites, detected faint and pervasive sounds from the edge of the universe, that clinched the argument for the world of astronomy against strong defenders of a steady-state universe.

At the end of the last segment of his series, Dr. Hawking pronounced, "We now know how God started the universe. What we do not know is why." An exhilarating statement, really. Religion has long been preoccupied with that why and has had plenty to say about it. Saint Thomas Aquinas put the matter in the most pithy way: *Bonum est diffusivum sui* (the good tends to spread itself around). That is why God made everything and all of us.

Henri Nouwen says the above more expansively and scripturally in *The Return of the Prodigal Son*, his book-length rumination on the Rembrandt painting of the same name:

The great mystery of our faith [is that] we do not choose God, God chooses us. From all eternity we are hidden "in the shadow of God's hand" and "engraved on his palm." . . . God "knits us together in our mother's womb." . . . He loves us with a "first" love, an unlimited, unconditional love, and wants us to be his beloved children . . . It is the first and everlasting love of a God who is Father as well as Mother . . . Jesus' whole life and preaching had only one aim: to reveal this inexhaustible, unlimited motherly and fatherly love of his God and to show the way to let that love guide every part of our daily lives.

We all aspire to the kind of faith that Nouwen expressed and lived by. It can affect our lives tremendously. Often, I think, what is diagnosed as a psychological problem is, in equal parts, a metaphysical problem. In the movie *Winter Light*, Max Von Sydow plays an older man who was depressed unto suicide by the prospect of the Chinese (the Russians?) dropping the bomb. In the cold war era, this was no mere fantasy or maladjustment. No more, in our own day, is it a pathology to be saddened by ethnic cleansing, biological warfare, and strategic bombing. The misfortune would be to feel the situation helpless or to feel oneself so.

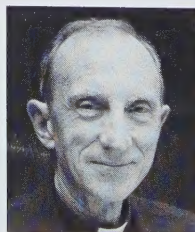
I allude in my poem to a "you"—my Jesuit classmate and dear friend Edward Malatesta, long on the Editorial Board of *HUMAN DEVELOPMENT*. Ed had a robust Catholic faith, nourished by his New Testament studies, especially of Saint John's gospel and letters, and by his years of teaching scriptural spirituality in Rome. In difficult, hurtful, or scandalous conditions, he was never one to sit on his heels.

Ed had always been bent on extending this faith into China. Eventually, in his mid-forties, he wrested from the Jesuit superior general the permission to study Chinese at the Defense Language Institute in Monterey, California. Father Arrupe gave him two years, period, to learn the language. Ed bet him a rosary he could, and he did. He then set out on his mission of multiple contacts with students of religion and seminarians in China.

Before long, with that same long-range vision and tranquil faith, and despite an increasing affliction with asthma, Malatesta established the Ricci Institute for Chinese-Western Cultural History at the University of San Francisco. He traveled everywhere in search of benefactions, and to collaborate with scholars, and to teach and lecture. He made thirty-two visits to China. He was earnest in paving the way for Chinese scholars of religion in the United States. Everyone recognized in him tremendous determination, happiness in his mission, great warmth and personal concern, deep devotion to Our Lady, and sometimes irritation that fellow Jesuits with control of resources would not be on board with him 110 percent.

Eventually, my friend just plain tired out, in mid-course, while teaching where he wanted to be—at the diocesan seminary in Shanghai. He died on January 27 in Hong Kong from complications of a heavy cold. The suddenness of his going to God affected me strongly, I must admit. He is no doubt telling me right now, however, from where he is—"the undiscovered country from whose bourn no traveler returns" (*Hamlet*, act 3, scene 1)—not to attend so much to our frail mortality, not to be of little faith. It would be his way.

So, without giving over any of my wonder at this human adventure of ours, I hereby put in for—i.e., I pray for—a double share of Ed's prophetic faith. Just yesterday I received some help in this regard as I thumbed the missalette for a congregational hymn. I happened once again upon that mighty text and melody the Protestants have passed on to us, "How Great Thou Art." How great—yes, for sure. We do not know the half of it.



Father James Torrens, S.J., is an associate editor of *America*.

Reading, Writing, and Living Soulfully

Francis Dorff, O. Praem., S.T.D.

As I left the classroom one day, I noticed that a student had left behind a copy of a text we had been discussing:

I cannot even understand my own actions. I do not do what I want to do but what I hate. When I act against my own will, by that very fact I agree that the law is good. This indicates that it is not I who do it, but sin which dwells in me. This means that even though I want to do what is right, a law that leads to wrongdoing is always ready at hand. My inner self agrees with the law of God, but I see in my body's members another law at war with the law of my mind; this makes me the prisoner of the law of sin in my members. What a wretched person I am! (Romans 7:15–24)

In the margin, the student had added a personal note: "Mary, this is me!"

Two thousand years after Paul had written this, his meditative writing had stirred a young student's soul. She honored that stirring, not merely by thinking about it but by adding a deeply personal note to the text. With that, she moved quite naturally from meditative reading to meditative writing.

Behind the text, Paul was actually modeling that move for her. As he was meditatively rereading the Torah, his soul was deeply stirred by the paradoxical difference between the Law of God and the law at work in his own life. The power of this paradox led him to write in such a soul-stirring way.

AIMING AT TRANSFORMATION

In recent years there has been a great renaissance in the art of soul-stirring reading, or *lectio divina*. In this way of reading, we read not just for information but also for personal transformation. We read slowly, with inner attentiveness, until we feel our soul stir. We then discontinue reading and begin attending to these soul-stirrings, so that the treasured text may find its home under our hearts and help us live more soulfully. When we read in this way, we are reading to be stirred up—personally, thoughtfully, emotionally, and spiritually.

The present renaissance in soul-stirring reading is setting the stage for a renaissance in soul-stirring writing. If we allow it to do so, meditative reading can introduce us quite naturally to meditative writing. We do not do this kind of writing in order to communicate with someone else. We do it in order to commune with our own inner life. We write in order to contact and cultivate the stirrings of our own soul. Writing in this way is a private, solitary, deeply personal spiritual practice. It is a form of soul-searching that sensitizes us to the subtle stirrings of our own soul and teaches us how to follow their lead to living more soulfully.

If we are already accustomed to reading meditatively, that is a fine place to begin experimenting with writing meditatively. Let me describe a few of the

many ways in which the latter can enhance and enlarge our practice of *lectio divina*.

LISTING TREASURED TEXTS

Over time, the practice of meditative reading fills our hearts with treasured texts that spiritually connect us to important moments in our lives. Our practice of meditative reading can focus us so steadfastly on texts outside of us, however, that it can lead us to overlook the texts it has written on our hearts. A good way to begin the practice of writing meditatively, then, is to date a fresh page in our notebook, become quiet, and make a list of texts that are or have been personally important to us. We need not limit our list of treasured texts to those our religious tradition considers to be sacred. We can include poems, texts from other religious or philosophical traditions, passages from other kinds of writing—any texts we personally have come to treasure.

In making a list of treasured texts, we may be surprised at the number and character of the texts that surface, and at the memories and associations that accompany them. The list itself can stir our souls. It can also reflect the pathway of our spiritual journey.

It often happens that we do not remember the exact wording of the texts that come from our hearts. Our soul-searching then leads to re-searching. In the process of searching for the exact wording of a text, we can discover first-hand that meditative reading and writing are intimately related. We may also make surprising discoveries that can greatly expand our practice of meditative writing.

TRANSCRIBING TREASURED TEXTS

Another way to experiment with the practice of meditative writing is to transcribe carefully the text on which we are meditating, as part of our meditative practice. Personally transcribing a text often allows it to stir us more deeply than just reading the text quietly to ourselves. It can also help us discover much more in a text than we do by simply reading it. Meditatively copying a text can let it become a part of us. It can unite us with the text's meaning and author in a deeply personal way.

Once again, we need not limit such texts to passages from sacred scripture. We can include any text that touches, moves, puzzles, or inspires us personally. Along this line, I think of a woman who came across "The Rainmaker"—a powerful story about a woman who is able to create harmony and blessing around her, and to deliver her people from a death-dealing drought, simply by mindfully going about the tasks of her everyday life.

When the woman first read that story, she was going through a difficult transition in her life. The story came to her as a gift. It moved her deeply. She felt compelled to copy it in her journal as a way of accepting a gift and taking it to heart. In the middle of her pain, she had finally found a story that spoke of the kind of person she had always wanted to become.

That was years ago. Last year, I received a letter from her in which she had copied two moving commentaries on the story, which she had just discovered. A few days ago, when I was speaking with her about the form her life is currently taking, she said, "It's the story of the rainmaker all over again." Clearly, that story continues to stir her soul, and she continues to honor those stirrings by writing and living her way through them.

As we continue to discover stories, poems, and other texts that have a similar soul-stirring power in our own lives, and as we allow that power to reveal itself in our own handwriting, we begin to realize that there are many more sacred texts than the religions of this world have been able to codify. As one form of meditative writing, we can then begin to collect our personal treasury of soul-stirring texts and continue to explore them through meditative writing. In a very personal sense, they are our scriptures.

ILLUMINATING TREASURED TEXTS

Sometimes we feel that transcribing a treasured text is just not enough. We feel stirred to copy out the text as beautifully as we can, enlarging and coloring the words and letters that touch us most.

This is another classical way in which meditative writing allows us to take a text to heart. In following it, we become part of a long meditative tradition of illuminating soul-stirring texts. We may then begin to understand why the ancient monasteries placed such importance on this kind of meditative writing—and why a special room, called the *scriptorium*, or "writing place," was set aside especially for this purpose.

She may not know that she is a part of this ancient tradition, but I know a woman who writes her whole personal journal as a beautifully illuminated manuscript. It is her way of honoring the soul stirrings of her life. She does not feel obliged to write everything. A few treasured words are quite enough to keep her in touch with her soul.

ENLARGING ON TREASURED TEXTS

As we continue doing this kind of text-based meditative writing, we often find that our writing does not want to stop with transcribing or illuminating the original text. The text begins to come alive again, of-

ten seeming to jump off the page. It stirs up thoughts, feelings, insights, memories, emotions, and possibilities in us that are not contained in the text itself. At first, we may try to catch these stirrings in marginal and interlinear notations. Later on, we find that they need much more space. Part of our practice of meditative writing then becomes enlarging on treasured texts and exploring their latent meanings and hidden implications for our own lives.

When we start enlarging on treasured texts in this way, we become part of yet another traditional form of meditative writing. For several years, I studied medieval manuscripts, in which I was delighted to see the scriptures come alive in this very personal way. In some manuscripts, the monks or clerics added marginal glosses or interlinear comments. In still others, they wove the text and their commentary together in what was sometimes called a *catena aurea*, or “golden chain,” of reading and writing. Our own attempts to take a treasured text to heart through meditative writing often unfold in the very same way.

IMAGINATIVELY EXPLORING TREASURED TEXTS

Another classical meditative way of taking a text to heart is what some call “active imagining”—imaginatively placing ourselves in the situation described in the text and mentally noting how that feels and what it reveals to us. A variation on this traditional practice involves meditatively speaking with one of the persons in the scene or with the author of the text. Both of these soul-stirring practices allow a treasured text to come alive again by letting it move through us as we move with it.

These ways of imaginatively entering and exploring a text can be considerably enhanced when used as exercises in meditative writing. Since what happens in such imagining and inner conversations is often as subtle and elusive as dreaming, writing it down makes us more attentive to it, and it more tangible to us. It also gives us an ongoing record of these inner experiences and lets us recognize the continuity that underlies them. In addition, it makes it possible for us to reread these experiences at a later date and to discover a deeper meaning in them than we may have realized at first.

LIVING SOULFULLY IS GOAL

Over time, these and similar exercises can let us experience meditative reading and writing as soul-stirring twins. Reading leads to writing, writing leads to reading, and both are capable of stirring the soul.

A simple exercise can help us experience how meditative writing and reading go hand-in-hand. We be-

come quiet and silently read back to ourselves something we have written, attending to both what we are reading and how it is affecting us.

Such silent reading can be an important meditative exercise. It may allow us to discover a truth we did not even realize or remember having written, and to experience our souls being deeply stirred by our own writing. This often stirs us to write more.

A distinct exercise is to read aloud to ourselves what we have written and to write down whatever that stirs up in us. Reading aloud can sometimes evoke feelings, memories, insights, and other inner experiences significantly different from those we experienced when we were writing or reading silently to ourselves. Thus, vocalizing what we have written can take our meditative work a step further and lead us to write some more.

I remember a woman at a workshop who evidently thought that our meditative writing was getting much too serious. She read aloud from what she had written, thinking it would provide some comic relief. Halfway through her reading, to her amazement, she began to cry. What she had thought was funny as she read it to herself suddenly felt sad as she read it aloud. She now had something more to write.

As we continue to practice meditative writing, our writing often becomes much broader than the text-based exercises described here. It teaches us to follow the stirrings of our own soul wherever they lead. By doing so, our meditative writing gradually expands to embrace our whole life.

If our soul is stirred by reading treasured texts, however, that is still a fine place to start experimenting with writing as a meditative practice, and with the creative interrelatedness of reading, writing, and living soulfully. In the end, living soulfully is what meditative reading and writing are really all about.

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Ongoing Religious Formation

Mary Kevin Rooney, A.S.C., M.A.Th.

Religious formation needs to be continued after final vows. No matter what we name the experience, it calls for nothing less than ongoing conversion. Willigis Jager, in his book *Search for the Meaning of Life*, describes this experience in terms of *orthonoia* (straightening out our minds), *paranoia* (the confusion and breakdown that must happen for us to let go of what our minds have so neatly packaged to give us the illusion of control—what John of the Cross calls a “dark night”), and *metanoia* (ceasing to “play God” and surrendering to the One who is really in charge).

My community has assigned a person to facilitate this ongoing transformation full-time—a marvelous commitment, considering the diminishing number of sisters bringing in salaries. Many religious find it hard to make the transition from “Oh, you’re formation director” (i.e., in charge of one or two women entering community) to “Oh, you’re about serious opportunities for our province renewal, or for my/our renewal.” What might account for this difficulty? Let’s try these for starters:

- an era of individualism;
- aging and the fears that often go with that stage of development;
- the comfort and ease of the status quo;

- the lack of groups of novices on whom to project either our hopes or our failed dreams;
- the “forever” meetings that seem to belong naturally to enfleshing strategic plans, convergence possibilities, and renovations of motherhouses;
- the rat race absorbed from our culture, which doesn’t know how to get off the treadmill of ministry activities;
- the lack of prioritizing amid the countless choices before us, and the resultant loss of dynamic gospel communities.

These are just a few areas in which we recognize ourselves. Need I go on?

NO QUICK FIXES

The solution? Typical of our generation, we try to find quick answers, to have more meetings, to work harder, to find the magic cure. But what if the answer is not a first-world answer with just the right words? What if the answer will not come until we opt for the Word, stake everything on it, and wait for it to be revealed? Religious life is historically a gift of the Spirit to the church and, when lived well, is characterized by people who dare to say the unpopular thing, to do the foolish thing, to stand with those

treated as “things” (those “nonpersons” out there for whom we build bigger prisons, from whom we steal for our comfort and tax breaks, against whom we shield our eyes lest we see our own judgment). Could the gift God offers us have something to do with the suffering servant mystery, the living Presence hidden in our own broken dreams and promises? Is it that the Divine is couched in this evolving mystery but we don’t recognize that reality? (“His own people did not accept Him”—John 1:10–12.)

If the best teacher is the one who shows us, who teaches by example, perhaps our best teaching moment is now. Is the invitation, the challenge of this stage of development, a call to nonviolence and a stance of forgiveness toward ourselves for our inability, as religious, to see the way? And even if we did see, would we follow that way? As someone has well said, we’ve let our prophetic gift lie dormant—the gift that allows us to see because we know some other experience. It’s precisely this that makes us recognize the incongruities of the values, beliefs, and life stances into which many of us have settled.

TRUST AMID CHAOS

When John XXIII was elected pope, I thought the church was lost. After all, Pius XII was my childhood pope, and the sun continued to rise and set on him in my unexamined and youthful days in religious life. How much I was to learn from that experience of idol worship! How could I know that God would use a man of simplicity to point the next direction, to have the courage to call a council, and then to put the church in God’s hands each night and fall asleep in peace?

The lesson has something to do with trust in this interim period of seeming chaos. It’s easy enough to trust when sight is involved, but the height of trust is to believe in someone when all the signs seem to point to abandonment. The core issue here is intimacy. Father Richard Sweeney defines intimacy as the capacity to commit ourselves to particular relationships and to embrace the challenges that these entail. Our trust must be strong enough that intimacy is experienced as a reality that energizes and sends us out of ourselves, both in service to God’s people and into union with God. Is this the generativity to which God invites religious life today? Perhaps this is the contribution most needed in our first-world culture, which needs to see and feel everything. This is powerfully summarized in Psalm 69.

After describing in graphic detail the anguish and loss in his personal life and in the life of his people, the psalmist ends by praying thus: “I will praise the name of God with song; I will magnify God with thanksgiving. This will please the Lord; let the oppressed see it and be glad. You who seek God, let your hearts revive. For the Lord hears the needy, and does not despise his own who are in bonds.”

Perhaps our gift to the church today is to move beyond despair to an integrity that can live with ambiguity, that isn’t afraid to be truthful about where we find ourselves in this moment—in fact, to count on our neediness as the magnet that draws God’s loving compassion. When God invites us to receive this free gift and to give it away, it’s actually big enough to encompass not just ourselves, our church, our world, but all of creation.

In this time of disguised transformation, let us ask God to complete in us the work so powerfully begun. Let’s not be fooled by the day of anguish, by the seemingly endless deaths of the Rabins of the world, by the Bosnias of our globe. Habakkuk’s prayer must be our own as we take one step at a time in the new exodus: “Though the fig tree blossom not, and there be no fruit on the vine, though there be no yield of the olive tree, no food in our fields, though the sheep vanish from the fold and there be no cattle in the stalls, yet will I rejoice in Yahweh, I will exult in God my savior. Yahweh my God is my strength.”

Transformation does not happen without our choice, our yes. God is always awaiting our generous response.

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The Mind's Role in Healing

Paul J. Bernadicou, S.J.

In recent years, even the secular media have reported on the power of prayer and meditation to heal. In the *Wall Street Journal* (December 20, 1995), an article entitled "The Healing Power of Prayer Is Tested by Science" noted that the National Institutes of Health and other citadels of traditional Western medicine are funding research on the subject. In that article, Herbert Benson, the Harvard Medical School author of books on healing meditation, tells of receiving five to six calls a week from health maintenance organizations (HMOs) asking about the "spirituality of healing." *Time* magazine (June 24, 1996) quotes Benson asserting that "anywhere from 60% to 90% of visits to doctors are in the mind/body, stress-related realm." His own research confirms that meditation slows down heart rate, respiration, and brain waves; muscles relax, and the effects of epinephrine and other stress-related hormones diminish.

A generation ago, in the 1960s and 1970s, the human potential movement began to note the psychological and physiological effects of meditation. Lawrence LeShan's best-seller *How to Meditate* (1974) highlighted the therapeutic results: "We train ourselves to regard ourselves seriously and to be concerned with our total being, involving . . . our best possible relationships with others, which we begin to

realize is a deep need . . . that is a part of our total being." LeShan became convinced that learning really to care for our deeper selves also led to a like concern for the well-being of others.

As we move into the last years of the 1990s, New Age thinking prevails where the 1970s' experiments left off. The *Time* article mentioned earlier focuses on Deepak Chopra as "one uniting figure" amid various healing forms. He is both a physician (endocrinologist) and a Hindu pundit whose true genius "lies in synthesis, in an amalgamated vision he can express in the language of computer or Arthurian magic or devotional verse." He has already racked up millions of book sales with one best-seller after another, starting with *Ageless Body, Timeless Mind* (1993). *Time* characterizes it as "a hodge-podge of personal anecdote, unfootnoted references to scientific studies, literary allusion, commonsense wisdom and spiritual speculation; it features Dostoyevsky, the Rig Veda, bar graphs, German physicist Werner Heisenberg and exercises you can perform at home."

JOHNSTON'S INSIGHTS

Looking for a Catholic Christian appreciation of this interaction between faith and healing, meditation and holism, I rediscovered how remarkably

insightful and even prescient was William Johnston's 1974 *Silent Music: The Science of Meditation*, recently republished in a second revised edition. Described by some as a later Thomas Merton (the renowned American Trappist monk who died in 1968), Johnston has devoted much of his life and writing to the practice and study of meditation. Like Merton, he has the gift of articulating his experience and discoveries in a way that speaks to a wide range of modern searchers for wisdom and healing in meditational practice. Johnston taught at the Jesuit Sophia University in Tokyo for more than thirty years, during which time he became a key exponent of the Christian mystical tradition in dialogue with Buddhism.

While writing *Silent Music* in the 1970s, Johnston perceived something stirring in our modern consciousness. Tens of thousands of people, especially the young, were involved with Eastern meditational experiences. In the course of investigating what scientific analysis was uncovering about meditation in both the East and West, Johnston outlined the ways, common to many religious traditions, by which one may enter the deeper states of consciousness. Central to all meditation is love, he found—the most powerful energy in the cosmos, and the most healing agent we know as well.

Meditation can certainly be therapeutic, and its potential for healing the body and mind was beginning to be realized at that time. In *Silent Music* Johnston points to the discovery of “passive energy” and other physiological and psychological benefits gained from meditation. In his uniquely lucid and personal style, he describes the remarkable impact of meditation on relations between people and on the search for friendship and intimacy. The nonattachment and knowledge of empathy required in meditation can help people meet at the core of their beings in integrated, healed, and holistic ways.

MIND'S ROLE IGNORED

Introducing a section on various aspects of healing, Johnston writes, “Western medicine, it is now recognized, has been desperately one-sided, largely ignoring the role of the mind in the healing of the human body.” Medical research indicates that up to 80 percent of modern sickness is either psychosomatic in origin or has a psychosomatic dimension. In particular, diseases that do not afflict animals yet debilitate humans are regarded as psychosomatic. But as Johnston notes, “While admitting psychosomatic sickness, the West has been slow in developing a process of psychosomatic health—that is to say, health of body that will stem from health of mind or from mental control of bodily functions.” Presciently, he

saw meditation as one of the principal means of such therapy in the future.

A chapter on the healing of the mind reminds us that it is now axiomatic in psychology that most neuroses and emotional disturbances are connected with the memory. Ghosts from the past inhabit our memory, influencing our present conduct. In order to be healed, we must find some way of confronting these memories, or handling them, or becoming detached from them. In this, of course, certain forms of meditation can be very useful, especially if they open us to the therapeutic experience of being loved and learning to love.

The following chapter of *Silent Music*, on “the deeper healing,” articulates a profoundly Christian interpretation of our individual conversion and transformation as disciples of Jesus so that we live in his Spirit. Existential angst and separation are healed by contemplative enlightenment alone, which entails a process of death and resurrection in which union with Christ is the ultimate healing. Johnston elucidates a similar pattern in Buddhism. “It is precisely because the self cuts man off from the whole that it must die; and it is by death and the loss of self that man enters into *nirvana* or union with the cosmos.”

A chapter on cosmic healing rounds out Johnston's reflections on the benefits of meditation. We are invited to embrace the macrocosm in this age of planetization, when humankind longs to be liberated from the confining narrowness of nationalism in order to become a real community of all peoples with our one God. John of the Cross is the exemplar of such mystical holism: “How cosmic is the experience of one who loves the mountains, the solitary wooded valleys, strange islands . . . silent music! His is a love affair with the universe. And like every true love affair it is healing and strengthening and beautiful. It is through such love that the universe will be transfigured.”

In his latest, comprehensive volume, *Mystical Theology*, Johnston reenforces his conviction that contemplative healing is today for the many. Again with an appeal to John of the Cross, he writes that the book attempts “to do for the twenty-first century what Saint John of the Cross did for the sixteenth century. That is to say, its aim is to teach contemplative prayer to men and women who are thirsting for the living water.” Although *Mystical Theology* does not expressly focus on healing like the earlier *Silent Music*, it again broaches the topic of cleansing the unconscious: “Now the great healing process is growth. Jung himself said that problems are never solved: they are outgrown. And growth takes place as the unconscious becomes conscious.” This process can be joyful and liberating, but it can also be painful and remorse-filled. The shadow side emerges into the conscious

**More than medication or
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incarnated in the person
of Jesus the healer**

But what about the actual practice of entering into healing meditation in a consistent, fully Christian manner? Over the past twenty-five years, excellent and enduring guides have emerged in the Catholic context, including the late Anthony de Mello on Christian exercises in Eastern form, Thomas Keating on centering prayer, Dennis and Matthew Linn on the healing of memories, and Thomas Ryan on meditation and yoga in Christian spiritual practice. I will conclude with a few remarks on what I find particularly helpful in each.

Jesuit Anthony de Mello—the victim of a sudden heart attack in his prime, some ten years ago—still continues as a great contemporary proponent of holistic prayer, thanks to videos and posthumous publications that keep his presence alive. His talent was to teach the whole person to pray and meditate. In so doing, he drew on traditions from the East and West—from his native India, with its yoga and Buddhist traditions; from Western biblical prayer; from modern psychology. A holistic body/spirit awareness is the experiential and liberating effect of his *Sadhana* exercises for many.

Thomas Keating builds on the attempt of his prophetic Trappist confrere, Thomas Merton, to make contemplative prayer available outside monastic walls. Centering prayer simplifies *lectio divina*, a form of monastic biblical prayer, so that its contemplative benefits may be experienced by twentieth-century laypeople. One focuses on a word or notion that arises out of a scripture passage (e.g., peace, love, Abba, Savior) in order to center oneself in a depth of faith. This can develop into a healing contemplative prayer in which God is given the initiative to purify one's inner self and unconscious desires, as Keating explains in his recent book *Intimacy with God*.

Immensely helpful for healing prayer have been the various publications by Dennis and Matthew Linn, beginning with *Healing of Memories*, which showed how to make creative use of confession as a way of learning about oneself. Their simple six-step program, reminiscent of the Ignatian examen of consciousness and the biblical process of forgiveness, shows one how to go back to memory after memory, turning each one over to the Spirit. Many have found that past hurts no longer control them; rather, the freeing power of the Spirit of Jesus reconciles and heals. From this basic experience, the Linns have published a whole series of helpful guides for dealing with painful memories and losses.

A recent volume, Paulist Thomas Ryan's *Prayer of Heart and Body*, recommends guidelines for yoga as

mind with all its ugly and fearful fantasies; the awareness of one's sinful inclinations can overwhelm.

"The great challenge," Johnston contends, "is to face one's shadow, to integrate it and to accept it. Put in religious terms, the challenge is to accept that one is a sinner and to rejoice. Paul did this when he cried, 'When I am weak, then I am strong' (2 Cor. 12:10)." Johnston appreciates Jung's astute observation that our accepted shadow can become our friend. And gospel wisdom confirms Jung's insight when it says that the tax collector who acknowledged his sinfulness was justified, rather than the Pharisee who did not see his shadow at all. This leads to the inevitable conclusion that dark-night exposure is relevant for modern people, "that it is a herald of profound enlightenment, and that the creative people who find themselves isolated in impenetrable darkness are the truly privileged ones who share in the redemption of the world. O night more lovely than the dawn!"

Johnston thus elaborates an informed and insightful theory of the healing power of contemplative prayer for committed and informed Christian believers today. To my way of thinking, he brilliantly unfolds the healing enlightenment that meditation and prayer uniquely facilitate on the psychic and existential levels of human experience. More than medication or merely therapeutic technique, sincere meditation and prayer open the human heart to the divine initiative incarnated in the person of Jesus the healer.

a Christian spiritual practice. Though Hindu yoga originally developed with the intention of training the body and mind for meditation, its healing and holistic benefits are currently recognized by health-care providers. Ryan cites Dean Ornish's *Program for Reversing Heart Disease* as testimony to yoga's effectiveness in lowering blood pressure and heart stress. Ryan states that the meaning of yoga as "union" says it all: "This union, or harmonious integration of spirit and body, is not about uniting separate things. Rather, the practice of yoga fosters realization of the union which is already present. Union with parts of ourselves, with others, with all of creation, and with God. For a Christian, any method which positively contributes to our awareness of this union deserves consideration as a discipline leading to a more abundant life."

So Catholic Christians are not without tried and tested guidance through the current maze of New-Age enthusiasts regarding the healing effects of meditational practice. Jesus was himself a healer, and his mission continues in new and promising ways through practioners and authors of healing care, both in and out of the church. We are fortunate to have highly competent guides such as those mentioned above, who help us discover and discern healing

practices that are profoundly expressive of our Christian faith while holistically enriching Jesus' healing ministry in our time.

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Letter to the Editor

Dear Editor:

Last year you were kind enough to publish my letter describing conferences being offered by the Interfaith Sexual Trauma Institute (ISTI). I am writing again in the hope that you will print this letter to inform HUMAN DEVELOPMENT readers about this year's ISTI National Conference, to be held at Saint John's Abbey and University in Collegeville, Minnesota, on June 8, 9, and 10.

This conference is especially for people who hold positions of leadership in all faith traditions, as well as those in the educational and professional communities who address issues of intervention, justice, healing, and prevention of the abuse of power by trusted leaders in communities of faith.

While examining how things went wrong in the past and what can and should be done about clergy sexual

misconduct, the conference will focus primarily on the future. It will offer concrete approaches to preempting problems by understanding and building healthy social and community systems in our belief traditions.

In addition to four keynote addresses, the conference format includes forty concurrent focus sessions, two panel discussions, a plenary assembly, and five six-hour teaching tracks on victim healing, advocacy issues, congregational response, theological formation, and leadership accountability.

Further information is available by phone (800-436-8431), by e-mail (isti@csbsju.edu), or on the World Wide Web (www.osb.org/isti). Registration can be arranged through my office.

Roman Paur, O.S.B.
ISTI Executive Director

Fostering Community Development

*Carroll Juliano, S.H.C.J., Rosine Hammett, C.S.C.,
and Loughlan Sofield, S.T.*

At a recent congregational chapter-of-the-whole, one theme emerged consistently and overwhelmingly: the members desired a greater quality of communal life. Each of the well-crafted and finely-tuned final statements echoed this apparent desire for community. However, at the conclusion of the chapter, a rather influential member was heard to say, "I hope we don't take this community thing too seriously."

This experience mirrors what we find in our work with religious congregations: there is both an intense desire for an improved quality of communal life and a sense of fear or resistance surrounding it. The members are at best ambivalent. This could be interpreted as negative, but we consider it a positive reflection of the development that has occurred in religious congregations over the past several decades.

First there was an intellectual assent to the concept of community as a value, with an emphasis on conformity rather than community. This was followed by a half-hearted discussion of changes, which hinted at a desire for something more than the safe and secure yet cold reality of formalistic community. Now there is a tentative movement toward a more interactive and intimate form of communal living, combined with resistance to the development of any clear expectations of each other. This third level is the stage

of ambivalence. It is our observation that many religious congregations are on the verge of a fourth stage, characterized by commitment to a better quality of communal life. Development in that direction would be life-giving for both the members and their mission.

INFLUENCES ON DEVELOPMENT

A number of positive and negative issues currently seem to affect the development of community.

Sociological research clearly indicates that American society is tending toward greater individualism, according to Wade Clark Roof, author of *A Generation of Seekers: The Spiritual Journeys of the Baby-Boom Generation*, and George Gallup and Jim Castelli, authors of *The People's Religion: American Faith in the Nineties*. Candidates entering congregations today are certainly influenced by this inclination toward radical individualism, yet they also hunger for meaningful community. They come with a spirituality, but they do not enter community to fulfill the drive for a deep, personal relationship with God. A. Kenneth Grodin, C.F.C., who conducted a survey for the National Religious Vocations Conference (*Cara Report*, Summer 1997), reports that "for both women and men, *community* appears to be the

primary reason for seeking religious life.” The options for ministry outside the context of community are endless, so ministry is not the attraction to community. Primarily, the attraction is the search for a supportive, life-giving, intimate faith community of individuals committed to living the gospel. If congregations do not have vital faith communities, they will probably not attract or keep the few candidates who approach them. This, of course, is not to deny the reality that many who have experienced the loneliness of radical individualism often enter religious congregations with unrealistic expectations of community.

The hunger for community is not just an experience of the young. Many members of religious congregations who have lived an individualistic lifestyle for years are now experiencing a void as they approach their middle and later years. They also hunger for community, but because they have endured for so long without quality community life, they may find it difficult to admit their need for intimacy and community.

We believe that the hunger for community is a sign of the maturing process occurring in both women’s and men’s congregations. However, a project undertaken by one of the authors a few years ago found that most men who had left the active priestly ministry recounted an almost identical story (see “A Crisis for Midlife Priests” by Loughlan Sofield, *HUMAN DEVELOPMENT*, Summer 1992). Especially as they approached midlife, they reported that their ministry, which had been rewarding until that point, no longer provided the same satisfaction. They realized that they needed more than just work and satisfying ministry: they needed intimacy, a sharing of life deeply. Those who were members of religious congregations wistfully recounted how they turned to their confreres and tried to explain their desire for community and intimacy. Often, their vulnerable declarations were met only with humor, ridicule, or sarcasm. Many eventually found someone who provided that intimacy and community, and they left their congregations. They had reached a point at which they were capable of acknowledging their need for intimacy. Perhaps some of them would still be in their congregations if they had experienced true faith communities in which life was deeply shared.

The search for community is not limited to members of religious congregations. In working with parish communities, we observe that the hunger for community is verbalized repeatedly. Our depersonalized society screams for an option. Many laypeople turn to members of religious congregations as persons called to a communal lifestyle, for witness that community is possible. Traditional religious-life

formation stressed that the vows have a witness value. But poverty, chastity, and obedience may not have the witness value they once did. People today want and expect members of religious congregations to witness to the value and possibility of community.

COMMITMENT TO COMMUNITY

Somewhere in the revised constitution of almost every congregation with which we have worked is the quote attributed to Jesus during the final discourse at his last supper: “I pray, Father, that they may be one even as we are one, you in me and I in you.” What often is omitted is the following line: “I pray that they will be one, that the world will know that you sent me.” This is the challenge. People will believe that Jesus was the Son of God when the committed followers of Jesus live as one. Striving to build community offers a true witness to those who search for God.

In a recent research project, one of the authors (Sofield) interviewed laypeople in the workplace who, by the way they live their lives, give witness to others. The primary purpose of the research (described in Sofield and Kuhn, *The Collaborative Leader*) was to determine what these people would suggest to religious leaders. Among their recommendations was an urgent plea to, “feed us.” This request included a desire for religious leaders to provide them with opportunities to develop life-giving faith communities. Many of these laypeople indicated that in large part, their own success in witnessing to others grew from the emphasis they placed on team and community development in their work situations.

Community has the potential to be life-giving, but it can also be messy. Community forces you to enter into relationships in ways that challenge and sometimes stretch. Ultimately, those who choose communal life must have positive reasons for doing so. Where there is no conviction, there is no commitment.

ELEMENTS AFFECTING DEVELOPMENT

For community to be more life-giving, a number of major issues must be addressed, including:

Psychosexual development. One of the greatest obstacles to the development of generative communities is that many members are psychosexually immature and thus incapable of living a generative, life-giving communal life. Only individuals who have attained the level of generativity have the capacity to contribute to and sustain the type of community that is desired.

Ideally, all members of a community should be trained to understand stages of community development, defenses in community, the dynamics of loss, and conflict management

Research on priests conducted many years ago by the National Conference of Catholic Bishops (reported in *The Catholic Priest in the United States: Psychological Investigations*) indicated that the majority of priests studied were in the “developing” (rather than “developed”) category—meaning that they had not yet achieved a sense of personal identity or a capacity for intimacy, both of which are prerequisites for becoming generative. Although the research focused on priests, we believe that the findings would also be true for religious sisters and brothers today.

Leadership can develop programs, or refer members to programs, that will help them develop in the areas of identity and intimacy. However, development is the responsibility of each individual. Only when the psychosexual stages are attained is there an assurance that members will have the capability to live and contribute to a life-giving community. The formation and training of the past often militated against the accomplishment of these crucial developmental tasks. This is partially because individuals were encouraged not to develop a personal sense of identity but to define themselves by their title or role. Many defined self by their membership in a particular congregation. In addition, developing one’s capacity for intimacy was not encouraged. “Particular friendships” were frowned on and discouraged.

Dynamics of communities. Most ministers are trained to be pastorally effective in working with

individuals. Not many are trained to understand the dynamics that characterize communities. Communities are groups, and the dynamics that exist in any group exist in community. To the degree that these normal dynamics are understood and lived, communities will be life-giving. When the dynamics go unnoticed or unattended, it is more likely that communities will be destructive. Ideally, all members of a community should be trained to understand stages of community development, defenses in community, the dynamics of loss, and conflict management.

Life-giving communities. We believe there are three elements that characterize successful communities. First, the community members have a common approach to their mission. They have discussed their apostolic goals together and have come to some general agreement about those goals. Second, they are able to engage in dialogue on a value level. This is an indication that the community members talk with one another about more than news, sports, and weather; they talk about issues of the heart. They discuss dreams, hopes, joys, fears, and sorrows. Third, the members of successful communities are able to share faith, which implies that they are able to risk talking about the God in their life. For instance, they are able to talk to each other about where and how they experience God inside and outside their community.

Self-esteem. An insightful priest reported that in his experience, one predominant factor distinguished the successful from the unsuccessful communities. The members of the successful communities appeared to have a well-developed sense of self-esteem.

When too many members of a community have underdeveloped self-esteem, the community is riddled with high levels of hostility and competitiveness. Both of these attitudes militate against the development of community. Conversely, when most members of a community have fairly well-developed self-esteem, there is a minimum of hostility and competitiveness, resulting in a more positive communal experience.

No one can give another self-esteem. Nor can others from the past, such as parents, formation directors, or religious superiors, be held responsible for the fact that an adult religious has low self-esteem. As an adult, each person has the responsibility for his or her own level of self-esteem. However, community members can create a climate conducive to facilitating the development of self-esteem.

Conflict. Communities develop only when the people involved have the willingness and capacity to deal

with conflict. Religiously-oriented people seem to have an almost innate fear of conflict. The failure to deal directly with conflict often retards the growth of community.

It seems that the skill of dealing with conflict has not been part of the formation of most community members. Until the members develop a greater comfort and confidence in dealing with conflict, communities are condemned to stagnation.

Forgiveness. Interestingly, psychological research on anger and conflict, such as that reported by Richard Fitzgibbons in *Psychotherapy* (Winter 1986) and that described by Robert Enright and colleagues in the monograph "Interpersonal Forgiveness Within the Helping Professions," indicates that the treatment of choice for both is forgiveness. There is a direct correlation between community members' ability to forgive and to seek forgiveness and the vitality of their community. Initiating the process of forgiveness inevitably seems to have positive repercussions.

People choose not to forgive for numerous reasons, including lack of adequate models, failure to forgive oneself, and the desire to retain one's anger.

Gifts. Every member of a congregation is a gifted and called person. The most successful communities are those in which the individual gifts of the members are identified, affirmed, and utilized. We are convinced that the greatest contribution to communal development is the ongoing utilization of a gift-discernment process. Communities that take time to acknowledge and affirm the giftedness of each member experience tangible results on many levels: the growth of the individuals, the improvement of community life, and the effectiveness of the ministry.

Capacity for community. We have developed a theory about membership in religious congregations, based on our experience over the years. We have identified four distinct groups within congregations: (1) those gifted and called to live the demands of an intense communal life and who continue to try to live that life fully; (2) those gifted and called who, while still formally remaining members of the community, no longer attempt to live even the minimal expectations; (3) those gifted and called who have the potential to live a rich communal life but have not yet psychosexually matured to the point that they are capable of doing so; (4) those neither gifted nor called to live community life, who somehow managed to survive formation and now are very unhappy, and who usually make those around them equally miserable.

Those in the first category need support, encouragement, and affirmation. Individuals in the second group should be invited to return to full contributing membership or encouraged to consider other career options. For those in category three, it is important to provide the climate and resources to foster growth. The suffering souls in category four, if they are too old to be invited out of the congregation, should not be allowed to inflict their negativity on others.

Positive experiences. Experiences produce the beliefs that people hold, which in turn determine their feelings, and usually their feelings generate their behavior. The implications for community are obvious. When individuals have had positive experiences of community, they will have positive beliefs and feelings in relation to community life. Those beliefs and feelings propel them into further investment in community. The opposite is also true: negative experiences produce people who avoid community. The past cannot be changed for them. What can be done, however, is to provide such people with corrective emotional experiences. New, positive experiences can change people from resisters to proponents of community.

FACILITATING GROWTH IN COMMUNITY

We believe that most members both need and long for a better communal life. Processes that respond to these human needs produce positive results in the development of community. We offer one such process and recommend that someone who possesses the necessary gifts be assigned to facilitate it. The process involves:

- 1) The reviewing of the congregation's documents to extract the statements that clarify the expectations of the community.
- 2) The distribution of these to each member, with a letter from the provincial or general inviting further dialogue on communal life—as well as guidelines for a process for personal reflection.
- 3) A provincial or regional meeting, which could include:
 - an inspiring presentation by the community leader;
 - an opportunity to reflect on the most positive experiences of community and to identify the elements that made those experiences positive;
 - time for sharing, recording, and distributing these positive influences;
 - an opportunity to talk, as local communities, about hopes and expectations; and
 - a report on those hopes to the provincial or his or her designate.

- 4) A follow-up process, which would include:
 - a community meetings attended by the provincial or his or her representative, with a focus on the expectations developed by the local community;
 - reports prepared by this representative, embodying the essence of what was decided at the meetings; and
 - follow-up letters or visits from the representative to hold the community accountable for what they have decided.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

There is a definite desire among many religious for a more relational faith community. Along with that desire comes a fear of the demands of a more relational way of life. The challenge is to develop explicit steps for responding to this desire and to provide the necessary resources to create a climate that will facilitate growth. We offer the following questions for communal reflection and discussion:

- 1) What do I need to do to develop a stronger sense of personal identity and a greater capacity for intimacy?
- 2) As a congregation, what can we do to form and train our members to understand the dynamics of community?
- 3) What processes do we have in place to foster: a common approach to mission; dialogue on a value level; the sharing of faith?
- 4) What explicit steps am I taking to foster my own self-esteem? What could I/we do to help create a better climate for the development of each member's self-esteem?
- 5) How do we, as a community, deal with conflict? What steps could we take to further develop our skills in conflict management?
- 6) How and where do I demonstrate what it means to be a forgiving person? What steps could we take in community to foster greater forgiveness?
- 7) How do we affirm the gifts of each member of our community? What process might we use to improve the practice?

- 8) Can I identify which of the four categories of membership describe me? Do I want to change that? If so, how?
- 9) What specific steps do we employ to foster corrective emotional experiences of community?

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The Power of Compassionate Love

Patrick J. McDonald, M.S.W.

As the summer of 1997 melded into the first delicate stirrings of autumn, the news media presented to the world what seemed like an endless ritual of mourning. First Princess Diana and then Mother Teresa died, each of them from heart failure. These two women, perhaps more in death than in life, sparked a worldwide discussion of the meaning of compassionate presence.

Princess Diana employed charm, class, influence, and an engaging personal image to call attention to AIDS victims, battered women, land-mine tragedies, homeless children, and an assortment of five hundred charities she personally fostered.

Although she was accused by some of never getting her hands dirty, she effectively used her image to call attention to serious human problems. She became the artisan of the photo opportunity, inviting the very press she loathed to make her the most photographed woman in history.

Agnes Gonxha Bojaxhiu evolved into Mother Teresa over 87 years. She became an archetype of compassion, confidently moving among the poorest of the poor, determined to bring healing to those who had nothing, her face aglow with the conviction of the timeliness of her mission. Her vital energy sparked the founding of a religious order, organized an army of volunteers, stimulated an outpouring of money and support for their mission, and healed large numbers of people who never met her.

As the news commentators labored to find fresh accolades to best describe the lasting contributions of

these women, they consistently fell back on two words: *compassion* and *presence*. The phrase *compassionate presence* aptly describes the persons of Princess Diana and Mother Teresa and sheds some light on the connection between compassion and the capacity to heal.

This article explores the notion of compassionate presence. I describe a few aspects of that energy, suggest how the human person evolves into a healing presence for others, and sketch some of the interplay between healer and healed. I also suggest a few implications for those who desire to heal, whether as therapist, spiritual director, pastoral minister, or compassionate friend.

HEALING PRESENCE

Although healing energy carries different names and finds its source in distinct foundations, all healing flows from an exchange of energy between two persons: healer and healed. The energy appears to find its specific definition in the inner depth of the healer, who becomes a healing presence through action, word, symbol. The action is synergistic, in that the healer cannot heal others without being healed herself.

Healing energy finds its source in the healer's values. Healers know the power of love. They freely access mysterious sources of energy from the cosmos. They are in communion with the God of compassion. They are unapologetic about their call to care for the disenfranchised. They become an embodiment of the very trait that drives them: compassion, that capacity

to feel with and live in a genuine solidarity with the reality of human suffering.

Their genuine connection with the sources of energy is communicated through a presence. More than charm or style, their public persona presents a wholeness that is convincing to those who come into contact with them. They attract, fascinate, challenge, confront, and invite a response from their admirers. They ask them to examine their lifestyle, enlarge their incipient concern for the marginalized. A unique combination of personal qualities makes their honesty infectious. The evolution not only of their honesty but also of other qualities related to deep compassion is tied to their own encounters with suffering.

Princess Diana's personal difficulties are a matter of public record. Her brother disclosed at her funeral that she had struggled for years with a real problem of self-esteem, yet she maintained a childlike desire to do something to soften the suffering of the poor.

The heroic level of virtue attained by Mother Teresa began with a simple call to live a more authentic life. Compassion drove that call. "We must grow in love, and to do this we must go on loving and loving and giving and giving until it hurts—the way Jesus did," she wrote in *A Simple Path*. "Do ordinary things with extraordinary love: little things like caring for the sick and the homeless, the lonely and the unwanted, washing and cleaning for them."

Our fascination with these icons of caring flows from an attraction to the powerful waves of energy that emanate from them. At the core lies the power of compassionate energy, and compassion brings with it an encounter with divine love itself. Like any encounter with the sacred, we stand in fear and trembling before its mystery.

I recently spent several hours conversing with a close physician friend. Our meeting afforded us an opportunity to reflect on the central place of compassion in healing, both in his medical practice and in my practice of psychotherapy. He maintains a busy schedule, not simply because of his competence as a family practitioner but also because he has developed the art of listening to a high level.

His patients state that at the core of their encounters with healing, they meet a man who always has time to listen to them. They believe that he understands their suffering, because he consistently extends care and concern for them. His sense of compassionate presence is reflected in his care for his patients, even in the middle of a busy clinic. Our discussion touched on the place of God in the daily routine of dealing with patients.

"I've evolved to this, at age 62," he said. "Healing is easy, because all I do any more is relate the best way I can, apply the appropriate procedures, then get out of the way and let God do the healing."

His statement articulates what any person of good will knows by intuition: if patients, clients, directees know that their mentor cares about them, healing usually takes place at some level.

Eye and facial expressions, personal manner, and an unmistakable sense of concern together convey the power of compassion. Wholeness is mediated through presence. An honest encounter unfolds because the healer presents an authentic self. The face of compassion becomes a personal face. The energy of compassion becomes concrete and specific *for me*.

Presence can represent physical charm, a deep commitment to the call of compassion itself, a contagious honesty, genuine care and concern, or an array of powerful emotions that flow through the transactions of the moment. Whatever the visible or hidden dynamic, healing takes place at some level: physical, emotional, psychological, spiritual.

EVOLUTION OF HEALING PRESENCE

I have observed that those who have developed a healing presence to a high level have done so through a discernible series of steps. Some of them have struggled with long-term health problems. Others have been deeply wounded through conflict, have lost marriages, or live with chronic pain. Unlike those who allow such difficulties to jade them or turn them in upon themselves, these people reach deep into a reservoir of latent energy and learn to heal others because they have been healed themselves. Their evolution is marked by six basic steps.

An unexpected event opens up the hard questions of life for them. These are people who have suffered and who have integrated hard-won lessons about the meaning of suffering. They have measured their own mettle, evolved through a serious life trial, and gained the wisdom that comes only through trial by fire. Although they do not actively seek suffering, they no longer flee it or fear it. They savor the wisdom that suffering brings and can see its value in their own life and the lives of others.

They experience a movement toward solidarity with the suffering and the marginalized. Their own comfort with suffering allows them to move with assurance among others. They express their solidarity with those who suffer because they know the sting of suffering themselves. This brings them into a solidarity with those who seek to share their wisdom.

In *Our Journey Home*, Jean Vanier, who founded the worldwide network of l'Arch homes for the mentally handicapped, summarized his awareness of solidarity as follows: "Whether we like it or not, we human beings are

all on board the same boat of life; we are all the same, with our beauty, our thirst for peace and communion, and also our wounds and our fears. We are all part of the same humanity. So it is better that we try together to create an environment that fosters life and not death.”

A change of values slowly brings healers to let go of attachments that impede healing, such as status, image, power, and fame. Their wisdom informs them that these seductive myths preclude the development of deeper energies. They discard them as impediments to living out the deep call to compassionate love. Their power to heal reflects a purification of their souls.

A compassionate response begins to color their every exchange with others because it becomes their central value. Often, little is said in a specific healing encounter; little allegiance is paid to the magic of exotic techniques. Healing seems to come about with minimal effort on their part.

Their followers identify with their purity of spirit. It shines through with candidness and honesty. Fascination with their character, personal charm, rich beauty, and undiluted commitment makes it rather easy to identify with them. In Diana’s case, her honesty about her own struggles with eating disorders, depression, alienation, and failure allowed millions of people to establish a solid identification with her. “I knew that if she could overcome these things,” said so many, “I could certainly find encouragement and strength to do the same.”

A good friend of mine is a popular and effective spiritual director, and her reputation continues to spread throughout the Midwest. Now 78 years old, she has lived the religious life for 51 years. She has evolved into a genuine healing presence. At the center of her character is a powerful and contagious quality of nurturing. Her nurturing is combined with a sense of timing; she knows when to nurture and when to invite a person to call a perception into question.

She continues to read, reflect, study, and synthesize current information about the spiritual life. This has kept her fresh. She enjoys the sharing of new ideas and is not frightened by different approaches to complex matters. She has integrated an active mind into a concerned presence, and this allows her to engage people creatively. In all, she manifests a presence that is the summation of a lifetime of work, a commitment to her directees’ growth, and a desire to use her gifts as best she can. This makes her effective in what she does.

A credible level of personal integration underlies the presence of healers. Thoughts, feelings, personal qualities, deep values, and real commitment all blend into a wholeness. Inner composure radiates the degree of integration.

Healers have progressed through a long evolution of their own, and they have come to peaceful terms with who they are. All signs of fragmentation seem to be gone. Even though they are honest about the reality of life and their continued struggle to give it meaning, they encounter it from an integrated center.

Their hard work is blended into an awareness of the value of their gifts; they use them as they can, suspending all desire for dramatic results. This leaves others at ease in their presence. Healing flows out of the deep connections they form with others. They carry a peacefulness that is engaging.

Their inner beauty does not depend on externals. They show little allegiance to the trappings of glitz or glamor. Their real beauty flows from a mature inner unity. They are matter-of-fact about the sources of their power. Mother Teresa was clear that her power to heal flowed from God’s care for her. “I can tell you about my path,” she said, “but I’m only a little wire—God is the power.”

The expression of healers’ inner beauty flows effortlessly, seeming not to depend on special techniques possessed solely by them. They claim no extraordinary powers and affirm that the energy they know can be claimed by anyone of good will.

I have been associated with the mental health profession for thirty years. My current efforts to heal have evolved into honest and straightforward encounters with people, and that keeps my work as refreshing and challenging as when I first began.

In my early days, I spent a great deal of time studying the masters in the field in an effort to absorb their almost magical healing techniques. They seemed to possess a special quality that fostered dramatic results where a less experienced person would accomplish nothing. Because of their personal charm, their explanations of what took place in the therapeutic encounter were convincing. It was easy to identify with their power, presence, and effectiveness.

After spending years exploring the rich variety of techniques in the ever-expanding field of psychotherapy, I began to realize that the masters made their techniques work primarily because they believed in their efficacy. Their techniques reflected their persons, values, biases, and blind spots as well as their charisma. The structure, theoretical basis, and conceptual framework of their techniques became convincing ways to explain what took shape in their work with clients. Even then, some explanations remained at the level of pure mythology.

Romance with techniques began to evaporate quickly as I went through several life transitions of my own. Midlife brought me to a more honest place with myself. The death of both of my parents engendered

an honest compassion for the losses of others. A deepening spirituality in the face of loss brought me face-to-face with the compassionate God. Each of these difficult matters brought me back to the hard work of facing myself, an inherently less desirable task than absorbing someone else's techniques.

Now I keep techniques somewhere in the background, where they belong. They have their value, of course, but only as part of a disciplined effort to put the client in touch with the same compassionate love of God that touches me. At best, my person becomes a concrete sign of the reality of God's love for those who are ready to explore it.

A firm belief that God is the healer in all circumstances has invited me to enter into a reservoir of energy that reflects the power of divine healing. Healing has evolved into an almost effortless labor of love. Consequently, my practice of psychotherapy is now more enjoyable than when I first began the serious study of human development.

Healing becomes a confirmation by action of its rightness at this place and time. Healers outgrow the restlessness to become like other people, even the masters in the field. They move into a deep acceptance of their gifts.

Efforts at healing bring success because healers intuitively know that their healing encounters are expressions of their destiny. A genuine insightfulness into the mystery of existence becomes their gift. God is alive in each moment, and the healing presence of God carries the moment toward eternal significance.

Diana's orchestrated walk in body armor around the edges of a minefield was more than a photo opportunity. It took place at the right moment in history to influence the thinking of a generation.

Mother Teresa's passing touch to a leper's forehead became more than a random gesture. She knew that this encounter was where they both belonged at that moment, and she walked in confidence that God would bring the moment to fullness.

BECOMING A HEALING PRESENCE

Even though the images of Mother Teresa and Princess Diana invite us to respond to the gospel call to heal, no two of us are called in the same way. We each have our own gifts, and a genuine healing presence comes to life when these gifts are accepted, valued, and integrated into wholeness. The evolution of a healing presence is the story of a person coming to terms with life as lived. Three fundamental attitudes invite a person into a mature expression of healing presence.

The desire to heal. The hunger to heal, to console, to be an ambassador of God's love often begins with stirrings of compassion that are not easily identified. These stirrings can be nurtured and developed into a thoughtful and articulated desire to touch others.

The gospels invite us to share in God's own healing energy. The desire to heal is often felt at an early age; then the story of life is one of slowly coming into correspondence with the full implications of that call.

An openness to listen to the lessons of life. No one becomes a healing presence through a closed mind or a fear that shuts down a free exploration of human destiny. Life itself, and the angst associated with developmental processes, are great teachers. Cynicism, doubt, anger, and uncertainty about the legitimacy of the compassionate call must be dealt with. God invites us to enter into the realm of love to the extent that we remain open to that call in the events of life itself.

The desire to understand the central place of compassion. The sixth chapter of the gospel of Luke tells us that Jesus withdrew from the madness around him to spend the night in prayer. When dawn came, he placed himself on level ground in order to address a great crowd of people who had come from far and near to hear him and to be cured of their illnesses. Luke notes that everyone in the crowd tried to touch him because power came out of him and cured them all. In simpler terms, Jesus was living as a healing presence. Healing energy emanated from him.

He addressed the crowd, set the terms for discipleship, and succinctly summed up the relationship between divine and human realities: "Be compassionate as your Father is compassionate." Thus, for the healer, compassion becomes the foundation for accessing the same energy that prompted the crowds to press in on Jesus. Compassion opens out into a sharing of that same energy.

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Steps Toward Completing Life

Mary Elizabeth Kenel, Ph.D.

One of the most significant developmental challenges of our lives is that of ego transcendence. This concept, as formulated by psychologist Robert Peck, was initially conceived as a task for those in the last quarter of life: to consider seriously and to deal with the loss of one's individual ego and sense of a separate self. It is a process that is often experienced as a "dark night," for it is very difficult for us to move beyond narcissistic preoccupation with the survival of and care for our own individual selves. This task is of such importance, however, that another psychologist, Heinz Kohut, equated its accomplishment with the acquisition of wisdom—the high point in the development of an integrated personality. His view is compatible with that of Joan and Erik Erikson, who identified wisdom as the virtue associated with the last of their life stages, integrity.

A negative reading of this developmental challenge to transcend our egos might suggest a certain diminishment of the individual, and certainly a loss of the selves with which we have developed a degree of comfort and familiarity over the years. Our culture, which has trained us to think in terms of the separate individual as the unit of survival, has inculcated a sense of "I" at the center of the psychological universe, just as Earth once was envisioned as being at

the center of the material universe. The paradox of the gospel reminds us, however, that if we wish to save our lives, we must lose them. Saint Paul speaks of a crucified Christ: an "obstacle" to the Jews, "madness" to the pagans, but to the believer, "the power and wisdom of God" (1Cor. 1:24–25).

The ecological crises and dangers to our world's survival challenge us to radically alter Peck's time frame in order to meet the demands of this task. Loss of a sense of complacency that our world will continue to exist as we know it ought to spur us all on to examine some of the ways in which we might at least begin to respond to the challenge of ego transcendence. Although it is no longer a task that belongs solely to the later stage of life, whatever elements of this challenge we who are older can actualize in our lives will serve as a legacy to those who are younger. Failure on the part of those to whom the task traditionally belongs makes the future even more hazardous for those who follow.

The task of ego transcendence, then, requires a radical transformation in the manner in which we view ourselves and our place in this world. Deena Metzger touches on the profound nature of such work: "We must be broken as violently as we were broken by the vision of Copernicus and Bruno, echoed, fearfully, by Galileo."

One of the first steps in the quest for ego transcendence and the development of an expanded ecological sense of self is an acknowledgment of sin on both the personal and societal level

EXPANDED IDENTITY IS KEY

Taking a more positive approach to the task of ego transcendence, Joanna Macy remarks, "What is required . . . is not so much a "being broken" as a being released, a humbling but also gratifying shift to a more accommodating, expansive, and joyous identity." Viewed in this light, the task of ego transcendence focuses not so much on the aspect of dissolution of the individual ego but on the invitation to open ourselves to a larger sense of identity. This expanded identity permits us to partake in an ecological sense of selfhood that transcends separateness and fragmentation, thus generating a profound connectedness to life.

Viewed from such a perspective, one aspect of ego transcendence converges with the life stage the Eriksons came to recognize as belonging to late middle/early old age: grand-generativity, whose hallmark is the virtue of caring. For the Eriksons, this caring was not to be limited to one's immediate family or a small circle of friends. Caring, as they understood it, was to transcend the concrete reality of one's family and embrace all the generations of children yet unborn, because we see them as part of ourselves. This is a clear call for an expansion of our ego identity. Such a perspective also seems to align itself readily with certain dimensions of celibate love—a love that,

sacrificing the establishment of the individual family unit, embraces and serves the entire family of the creator.

Students of depth psychology often liken life to a journey on which we are aided by certain inner guides, or archetypes. Throughout life, these guides assist us in learning the lessons of the various stages and offer us a certain energy with which to cope with the difficulties of each stage and complete the tasks appropriate to each stage. Each archetype also offers us a gift, or virtue, which represents the fruit of having further developed our true selves in response to the demands of any particular life stage.

WELCOME THE MAGICIAN

As we attempt to address the challenge of ego transcendence, we would do well to invoke the archetypal image of the Magician, whose task is to transform the "water" of lesser realities into the "wine" of better realities. The Magician's work brings about a transformation of consciousness that allows us to align our true selves with the cosmos. Only the power of the Magician's alchemy can effect such a conversion, in which the "lead" of our lives is transformed into "gold." Welcoming the Magician into our lives encourages us to find the gift of our personal power and invites us to change, to grow, and to enrich the world around us in the process. When the Magician is operative in our lives, the sacred is seen as immanent, acting to transform our selves and our society by providing us with a sense of connectedness with the whole.

As a psychotherapist, it has been my privilege to witness moments of grace, instances of ego transcendence and transformation, in my clients' lives—and to have experienced such moments in my own. These instances have generally been a matter of discovering within our own being the mystery by which life arises, renewed, out of painful losses, past mistakes, one's own sinfulness. I use the phrase "out of" advisedly, for transformation of this sort does not take place in spite of or apart from our brokenness. It is from that very brokenness itself that the "stuff" of transcendence and transformation arises. Saint Paul was correct: "God's power is made perfectly clear in our weakness" (2Cor. 12:9).

Sister Anne Higgins, D.C., a poet published in *Sisters Today* (March 1997), offers a beautiful illustration of the earth's ability to transcend natural disaster and transform itself. Speaking of the rebirth of Yellowstone Park after its devastation by fire, she calls our attention to wildflowers that grow "through the charcoal" and concludes, "In the heart of the fired wood, something new blooms."

HIGHER LEVEL OF INTEGRITY

Accomplishing the task of ego transcendence and experiencing transformation requires that we seek a higher level of personal integration, reconciling within ourselves the opposites—those contradictory pulls within us that set flesh against spirit, so to speak. Psychospiritual work of this sort would clearly relate to the tasks and achievements of the Eriksons' final life stage, that of integrity. But integrity is not merely a task of later life. Our ability to achieve integrity at the end of life is based in part on the efforts we have made over the years to integrate the conflicting elements of our personalities and to act according to our ideals and values. Our efforts are rewarded with a sense of being at home within the depths of our own hearts, able to echo the words of the first creation: "And God saw that it was good" (Gen. 1:31). To attain such a level of integration, however, it is necessary to open ourselves to the powerful gift of the Spirit—to become, as Hildegard of Bingen put it, "moist and green."

As we set about accomplishing the work of ego transcendence, Hildegard, the 900th anniversary of whose birth will be celebrated in 1998, would seem to serve us well as a role model. As was true of many Old Testament prophets, she herself attempted to deny or avoid the Magician within for a long time. Indeed, she "dried up," suffering both physical and spiritual sickness related to her refusal to write and share the images of her visions, perhaps because she feared the isolation that so frequently is the lot of those who walk the Magician's path. Her waiting period also may have served as a time of incubation wherein the clarity of her visions grew brighter and her ego strength developed and matured, for one does not enter lightly into the domain of the Magician.

Indeed, the scriptures warn us of the price we must pay to open ourselves to transforming grace. Jeremiah, for example, reminds us that before the chosen people could move from a covenant symbolized by commandments carved in stone to a new covenant that would be written upon their hearts by Yahweh, they first had to acknowledge their sinfulness (Jer. 31:31–34). Paul's letter to the Hebrews (5:7–9) also speaks of transformation as he presents us with the image of Christ as Wisdom, whose movement from flesh (*sarx*) to heavenly glory required that he walk the path of obedience—a path that brought him to Calvary. In a similar fashion, John's gospel (12:24–25) offers us an image of the single grain of wheat that had to submit to the darkness of the earth and die before it could flourish and bring forth fruit.

These images reflect "hard sayings"; most of us would prefer not to face our genuine guilt, obedience

is not one of our great American virtues, and the thought of transcending the limits of the human ego by dying to self is hardly comforting. Nevertheless, despite fearing the cost, a longing for transcendence and transformation in the depths of our hearts urges us on.

SENSE OF INTERCONNECTEDNESS

Speaking of the need to transcend the separateness and fragmentation of our individual egos, Joanna Macy noted that such change engenders a sense of interconnectedness with the whole of life that borders on that described by poets and mystics. Teilhard de Chardin's writings reflect a similar theme; he saw the "will to union" as one of the great motivating and integrating forces within the human personality. Before there is any hope, however, of our entering into a covenantal relationship with the Earth, poetically described by Hildegard as Wisdom's green garment, it is necessary to work, on a more personal level, at becoming "green" people.

To become "green" requires that we open ourselves to and immerse ourselves in Hildegard's *viriditas*—the transformative greening power that communicates both physical and spiritual vitality. This power is intimately connected to the creative power of the feminine, for Hildegard believed that all life ran dry if the feminine was repressed. She offers us the somewhat interchangeable images of Lady Wisdom, Dame Nature, and Mary (whom she refers to as the green virgin) to be our sources of the Spirit's *viriditas*, which breathes life into all creation and whose transforming power renews us all.

One of the first steps to be taken in the quest for ego transcendence and the development of an expanded ecological sense of self would appear to be an acknowledgment of sin on both the personal and societal level. Our relationship with the Earth has been marked, in subtle and in more obvious ways, by greed and exploitation of resources. Our "I-centered" cultural conditioning has fostered failures on our part to honor the beauty, balance, and harmony of the world. This has been true on the interpersonal level as well as on the level of our relationship with the world at large. Our complacent attitudes have contributed to Wisdom's green garment having been stained by pollution and acid rain, torn by strip mining and the indiscriminate logging of our ancient forests. We need to develop a renewed appreciation of the "rainbow covenant" that God made after the flood, not only with humankind but with all of creation. Like the chosen people, we are in need of a new covenant with the Earth—a covenant that will be written in our hearts transformed by the power of *viriditas*, God's green finger.

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Calvary**

COVENANT OF KINSHIP

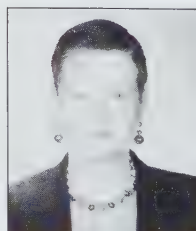
Through the accomplishment of the tasks involved in ego transcendence, we will be able to enter into a cosmic covenant of kinship whose hallmarks are those of a reverent and empowering love. Ego transcendence is a painful process, however, for dying to the comfortable limits of the narcissistic self often demands a period of submission in darkness, as was true for the grain of wheat—and it always brings us to Calvary, for it is through the cross that all opposites are reconciled. Entering into a covenant of cosmic dimensions requires the widening of our circles of compassion and a redefinition of those perceived as “we” and “other.” Transcendence of the personal ego, from an ecological perspective, demands that we recognize our kinship with others, including not only persons who differ along lines of race, color, nationality, or creed, but also all the nonhuman species that constitute the bulk of creation. The process of ego transcendence, then, results in our entering at a far

deeper level into the compassion of our God and walking what the Buddhists term the path of loving kindness. Such action furthers the work of transformation, moving us toward great-heartedness, encouraging in us a solidarity with all of creation, especially with the most truly voiceless: the land, the seas, the sky, animals, plants—all who form with us the great web of life.

Whether we are elders who see ego transcendence as an age-appropriate developmental task or younger persons who have recognized an ecological imperative for such development, our ability to perform the work necessary to bring about such transformation highlights our need for ongoing conversion and spiritual development. We need to invite the Great Magician into our hearts so that, purged of sin and filled with a new spirit, in place of hearts of stone we might receive hearts of flesh (Ez. 11:18–20), upon which our cosmic covenant may be inscribed. Perhaps our celebration of the anniversary of Hildegard’s birth might motivate us to look also to Sophia, Lady Wisdom, for she is the aspect of God who is intimately involved in the birthing of creation (Prov. 8:22–31). Human or nonhuman, we are all born of her cosmic womb. She is also a source of transforming energy among all creatures, having the power to renew all things (Wis. 7:27). Her gifts of healing and liberation bring life to all creation, be it the winter-damaged earth that responds to her gift of spring rain or the deserts of our ego-bound souls that drink her living waters and are made green again.

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Leading a Faith-Sharing Group

Alfred J. Micallef, S.J., S.Th.D.

While the parish continues to be the main-frame of the local churches, many thousands of faithful are joining movements of spirituality that have cropped up or been revitalized since the Second Vatican Council. These movements vary immensely; it is impossible to speak about them as if they were the same. Most of them evoke in the mind's eye huge gatherings of people rapt in prayer or singing or listening to narratives of profound personal spiritual experiences, but not interacting much. This may be so in some movements, but even big movements like the Charismatic Renewal often meet in small groups.

Small faith-sharing groups are also used in parishes. Many a pastor uses small group meetings to help the more committed members of the parish grow together in faith. After all, our Lord himself used to hold group sessions for the twelve apostles. Jesus distinguished between his ministry to the crowds and the exchanges he had with his disciples, to whom "privately . . . he explained everything" (Mark 6:30–31).

The way of these groups is quite different from that of pre-Vatican II Catholic associations. In those meetings the emphasis was on imparting religious information, or what we may call catechism. Moreover, the animator of those "classes" was usually an expert in the subject matter (usually a priest) who imparted knowledge much as a teacher

would in any class. The communication in those meetings was asymmetric, flowing mostly from the teacher to the learner without reciprocity.

Present-day groups are quite different. Usually, Christians join such groups not so much to seek religious instruction as to share the experience of faith and to grow through that sharing. Actually, many persons committed to such groups may be quite lacking in doctrinal knowledge, which could be a weakness of this method. Usually, however, they are sought not for their theological preparation but for their experience in leading groups. Most of them are laypersons, untrained in theology.

Given the different nature and the different rationale of these groups, communication is different too. It is symmetric in that it flows from member to member, from leader to member, and from member to leader. All in the group have a personal experience of God and of Christ, so nobody is an "expert" on the subject, even though a member who is trained in theology (who need not be the leader of the group) might offer theological clarifications.

THE DYNAMICS OF SPIRITUAL GROUPS

The fact that these groups come together in order to pray and grow in faith and charity makes them

different from other groups, but not so different as to make them free of the group dynamics that are in play in every group. It follows that it will be helpful to any pastoral worker involved in this ministry to understand these dynamics—which, if misunderstood or not taken into consideration, can easily undermine the efforts of the members and render the group an inadequate instrument.

Learning in a group is different from learning in a class. In the first place, the learning is different in nature; it is not so much a movement from intellectual understanding to growth in the spiritual life as it is a growth in faith through affect, perhaps with the absorption of some intellectual understanding. What helps group members grow in faith is not so much the perceptions and objective comprehension of the Christian mystery as much as the “contagiousness” that the sharing of religious experience brings, even though nonintellectual or “unthematic” comprehension is not to be excluded. This makes the interactions of the group members the main vehicle of spiritual growth. The vitality of the group comes from within it; the group’s growth or decline depends much more on whether the group process is conducive to growth than on the validity and relevance of the subject matter discussed.

These dynamics determine the role of the group leader, who is not a teacher but an animator or a facilitator. He or she needs to facilitate interactions among group members, assuring that all have the opportunity to share their experiences, to be listened to, and even to be challenged and confronted, because this is the only way to true discernment. That may sound as if we are aiming far too high, but the group process, properly facilitated, is an excellent instrument and could help us reach such heights.

THE GROUP PROCESS

It is not my intention in this article to give a detailed description of what happens in groups. Rather, I would like to dwell on conflict in spiritual groups, especially small ones.

Most group dynamists agree that a group goes through a life cycle, much as each person does. When it comes to describing that life cycle, though, there is much less agreement than there is on the life cycle of the individual. The number of hypotheses is incredibly high. Much depends on the terminology used and on the characteristics to which researchers are sensitive. Many use Bruce Tuckman’s recapitulative work and find his four-stage life cycle useful. According to Tuckman, a group goes through the stages of forming, storming, norming, and performing. After years of experience, together with Mary Ann Jensen,

Tuckman added a fifth stage, adjourning, which applies mainly to groups that meet for a prescribed period of time and have to deal with their pre-announced death. Death occurs in spiritual groups too, but usually it is not preprogrammed, except in the case of groups that meet for a short but intense period (e.g., for a spiritual workshop).

According to Tuckman, in the first stage the members seek information on which behavior is appropriate. In this stage there is also the tendency to depend on the leader, a powerful group member, or preexisting norms. The members also think about the task at hand and try to find out how their group experience could help them accomplish it.

The second stage is one of conflict. At first the group members think that it is not bad to be together; people are polite and respectful. But after a while, there is open disagreement, which gives rise to tension, conflict, and hostility. This hostility is extended to the group’s task, and there is a great deal of emotional resistance toward accomplishing it.

In the third stage, if the group manages to resolve the difficulties of the second, the members experience harmony and start creating norms or rules about what they feel is appropriate and desirable in their group. More disposed to confront their task, the members share information that may lead to its conclusion. But they soon realize that their harmony has an artificial ring about it. In a way, it has become a compulsion: they do not want to offend each other in any way. Because they cannot be truly themselves, they cannot really be a group. This takes them to the fourth phase, during which, having accepted each other with their differences, they can dedicate themselves more fully to the task at hand.

The passage from one phase to another is usually not neat or clear; rather, it is a somewhat jerky movement consisting of both progress and regression. Little by little, however, if well facilitated by the leader, the group should succeed in moving forward.

THE CONFLICT STAGE

The group facilitator needs to be respectful of the stages of the group life cycle and to have the patience not to rush people. Deep personal sharing of spiritual experiences in the early life of the group is helpful to neither the individual members nor the group as a whole. For the sharing of one’s life with others to be fruitful and meaningful, an adequate level of interpersonal relationship needs to have been achieved. Actually, these two usually go hand in hand: some personal sharing leads to a deeper personal relationship, which opens the way for deeper personal sharing. I do not think that the sharing of personal

experiences with strangers is healthy, even if those experiences are of a spiritual nature.

Perhaps the most upsetting experience in a spiritual group is the emergence of conflict, especially soon after the group seems to have gotten under way. The untrained leader might wonder why this is happening and where he or she has gone wrong. Conflict is not easy to reconcile with a spiritual group built on the primacy of charity.

To face these painful experiences fruitfully, it is necessary to understand their nature. Here, research done by group dynamists could be of great help to leaders of spiritual groups. Warren Bennis and Herbert Shepard, in their 1956 article "A Theory of Small Group Development," which has become a classic, give a detailed explanation of the nature of this conflict. At its roots are the individual members' orientations toward authority and problems with intimacy. In other words, the group members are concerned about dependence (how they will relate to authority) and interdependence (how they will work out their personal relations with one another).

As a representative of authority, the leader often becomes victim of the hostility of the group. It would be helpful for the leader to keep in mind that this hostility is most likely directed not toward him or her personally but toward his or her role. Unfortunately, some leaders, unaware of these dynamics, think that they themselves are being attacked and respond by defending themselves. The effects of such behavior could be devastating: they might be too aggressive, causing the group to break up, or they might not be strong enough, causing themselves great frustration. In both cases, people can get hurt. Moreover, because the group has not created a space for the expression of anger and frustration, chances are, that the group sessions—if they do manage to continue with so much agenda buried alive—will be sterile, and the group will never become an instrument that facilitates discernment.

Some people, Bennis and Shepard argue, are very dependent on authority, while others are rebellious. A group will have a mixture of these two types. Finding themselves in a situation that requires them to deal with a figure of authority and realizing that other people react differently to such a figure is at the root of the conflict. Little by little, they will learn—with the help of those who can accept authority without being too dependent upon it—to accept the leader as a member of the group.

Another source of conflict in this phase is the level of personal sharing that is fitting in the group. Bennis and Shepard speak of two subgroups within the group: the overpersonals, who would like to be very personal and intimate, and the counterpersonals,

who would prefer to be more objective and to maintain more distance. The problem with both of them is insecurity about their self-esteem, which they will try to safeguard in opposite ways: "For the one group, the only means seen for maintaining self-esteem is to avoid any real commitment to others; for the other group, the only way to maintain self-esteem is to obtain a commitment from others to forgive everything." Hopefully, the group will contain yet a third subgroup that is not threatened by the prospect of intimacy, which will help restore the members' confidence and commitment.

As can be seen, Bennis and Shepard are greatly influenced by Freud, both on the dependence issue, which recalls Freud's theory about the relationship with one's father, and on the intimacy issue, whose resolution Freud considered one of the two marks of the mature person.

Other authors, while agreeing about the dual nature of group conflict, concur with Bennis and Shepard that the conflict opens with the authority issue, but argue that after a while, the authority issue and the intimacy issue alternate unpredictably.

SPIRITUAL GROUPS AND CONFLICT

I am sure that some group leaders and members are wondering what I am talking about; they have never experienced any conflict of any type in their group. In a small research project I conducted a few years ago, few people reported having had any conflict in their groups. Before such evidence, one might ask whether it is really useful to insist on something that does not seem to exist except, perhaps, by way of exception. Such a question is more than valid, but there are other valid questions that might also be asked: How is it that all groups except spiritual groups report a period of conflict? Do these groups follow some special dynamics of their own? Are these spiritual groups really not experiencing conflict, or are they simply not acknowledging it? The necessity to probe further is obvious.

Some believe that the nature of the spiritual group curbs conflict. Robert Leslie, in *Sharing Groups in the Church: An Invitation to Involvement*, argues that church groups, unlike other groups, include God in their presence and give God loyalty and obedient love. Consequently, the relationship between the group member and the group leader changes, because the leader is seen as a person who, like the member, is dependent on a higher loyalty. As a result, testing the leader and expressing hostility toward him or her are curtailed in the spiritual group. But Leslie also admits that "since hostility has been frowned on in the Christian culture, its expression is

often withheld." So, while there may be some truth to the idea that spiritual groups experience less conflict on the dependence issue because of their nature, the possibility that conflict is being repressed remains great.

The research quoted above also touches on conflict in regard to the intimacy issue. Making oneself known intimately (and little is more intimate than describing one's religious experience) is a risky business, and hesitancy is only natural. But some people have a need to expose themselves in these matters, just as others have a need to expose themselves in other ways. In a group there will be all sorts. The level of sharing that is desirable for the group is decided by the group through a painful process of testing, checking, and risking. Often this process is long, and it is difficult to imagine it taking place without contrasts.

Contrasts and conflict may be frightening, particularly in a group with spiritual or religious growth as its aim. We tend to feel that conflict and confrontation do not mix well with prayer and spiritual growth. This is because we often wrongly tend to give a moral value to feelings; we believe that whenever we experience negative feelings, there is something wrong, and that it is much better to swallow those feelings than to express them. But the price for hushing up conflict is amputating the group process and rendering it sterile as an instrument of spiritual growth.

DISCERNMENT IS GROUP AIM

In order to understand better the curtailment I am talking about, we have to keep in mind the ultimate aim of the spiritual group. It is true that some groups meet simply to pray together, to meditate on the Bible together, or for some other similar reason. But the potentiality of a spiritual group is much greater; it could become a group of discernment, because ultimately, the end of prayer is discernment for finding and choosing the will of God.

Discernment in a spiritual group can be of two types: (1) discernment for the whole group, with the group placing itself before the word of God and, through sharing, deep listening, confrontation, and other interactions, seeking the will of God for the whole group (e.g., in the matter of choosing how to involve themselves in the church or in the world) and (2) discernment for a particular member who, in a particular situation, asks the group to help him or her with discernment. In the latter instance, the role of the group would be similar to that of a spiritual director. The group, as an unbiased participant, would help the individual member in his or her dialogue with God. Without advising the person what decisions to take, it would become like a mirror to the

individual, who would be able to discern better the movements of the spirit experienced as they are reported back to him or her by the group. Even in this second case, discernment is possible only through deep sharing—both by the member who is making the discernment and by those helping him or her through deep listening, confrontation, and the rest. In both cases, this process of discernment requires a group in the performing stage. And performing, for the spiritual group, is discernment.

But performing is a demanding activity that requires the group members to have overcome the affective problems of their relationships. Otherwise, they will be unable to concentrate wholeheartedly on their task. This is particularly true if the task is nothing less than discerning the will of God, which demands the greatest objectivity. In the Spiritual Exercises, in order to show the importance of objectivity in that discernment, Saint Ignatius tells the retreatant to imagine that the person about whom the choice is being made is somebody else, unknown to the retreatant, whose perfection is greatly desired by him or by her—or that the decision is being made on one's deathbed, when one would surely desire to make free decisions rather than decisions tinged by bias. The "somebody else" and the deathbed are intended to help the retreatant be completely liberated from bias so that the will of God may be discerned with absolute freedom.

But in order to achieve this objectivity, the group members need to learn to deal with each other as "object"; that is, in their mutual relationship, there should be no conscious or unconscious hidden agenda that would detract them from this objective. It will be impossible for the group members to help another member or to discern about the group if they still have unresolved feelings toward each other. This is especially problematic if such feelings are unconscious. Whereas conscious feelings can be laid aside by an act of the will, at least to some extent, little can be done about unconscious feelings, which thus affect not only those who have them but also the whole group. This is similar, in a way, to what Saint Ignatius calls "inordinate affections," which do not allow us to be free and objective. Through inordinate affections, we would be victims of our bias, completely unable to discern the will of God. This ties in to what is meant by members dealing with each other as "object"—not that they should have no feelings for each other, but that they should have no unresolved feelings or feelings that could hinder their freedom. If they are able to deal with each other as "object," they could provide each other with the mutual support and acceptance that are the *sine qua non* of communal discernment.

Group dynamists insist that the group needs to resolve the conflict stage before it can move on to the performing stage. The spiritual group is not an exception to this rule, notwithstanding what we have already said about the presence of God experienced as an authority figure, which contains to some degree the struggle with the leader. Common sense dictates that the freedom to confront in charity, to disclose in faith, to listen to the Spirit as it reveals itself to the group or to a particular member, is a point of arrival, not a point of departure. We cannot conceive of such a journey as comprising simply the passage of time; it must be a journey through thick and thin, a journey through conflict that must take place whenever human beings become intimate with one another.

The research referred to above, which showed that in spiritual groups there was little conflict, also indicated that in such groups there was very little discernment, even though it was not the aim of the research to study that phenomenon. Asked about discernment, one member of a Christian Life Community group of seventeen years' standing said, "For some individuals [in the group, discernment] is a reality; others as yet do not bring their discerning to the group." The member of another group that had been meeting for nine years said simply, "Very little discernment." Small spiritual groups are still finding it hard to become discerning groups. One cannot but speculate that the repression of conflict is at the basis of this difficulty.

DEALING WITH CONFLICT

Conflict is quite normal, so when you see it happening in your group, you should be about as scared as the parent of a two-year-old throwing tantrums. In other words, conflict is absolutely normal and part of the process of growth. Second, keep in mind that protests raised against the leader are usually not raised against him or her personally but against the leader's role. Other conflict comes from the difficulty we all have with intimacy. The leader's task is not to deaden the conflict but to try to help the group members resolve these issues.

Conflict should not be repressed; it should be allowed to surface so it can be dealt with. The leader must provide the group members with as much "space" as possible to express their feelings and must respond empathically so that they do not feel bad about experiencing anger or frustration. It is helpful for the leader to insist that feelings are amoral; they are simply the reaction of the organism to the environment. Many people believe that feelings are sinful and that if they feel angry at someone, for instance,

they are failing in their love, but that is not the case. What we do in response to our feelings—for example, hitting a person toward whom we feel angry—can be sinful, but the feeling itself has no moral value.

Emotional feelings give us a lot of information about ourselves. In this way, they are much like physical sensations. For instance, if I feel cold on a warm day, that signals to me that I may be running a temperature. Feeling cold on a cold day gives me different information—about the column of mercury in the thermometer, not about myself. Likewise, feeling angry, bored, or frustrated does not mean much in itself, but it provides precious information. I need only find out whether a given feeling is the result of something in the environment or something in the organism. In a group, the leader needs to help the members use their feelings to come to the causes of their uneasiness before authority and intimacy.

When group members express their negative feelings, make sure they use "I messages"; they are not to accuse others but simply to express how certain behaviors make them feel. Technically, this is called "feedback." When feedback consists of a description of a particular behavior and an explanation of how the one giving the feedback feels about that behavior, it cannot sound like an accusation. The other group members can be asked to say how they feel about the same behavior. This should help indicate whether what needs changing is that behavior or the attitude of the person who feels bad about it.

In this and other ways, what may seem to be a negative experience can be turned into one of learning and growth. This will help the group to proceed toward the last stage of its life cycle, during which the members will be able to practice discernment. If this happens, the group will have reached maturity.

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Life Satisfaction Begins with Trust

Elaine E. Swords

These are the stories of women who grew up in Christian homes in poor rural areas of Jamaica, West Indies. As infants, they were carried by their mothers to church and instilled with a sense of trust. For these women, trust is faith. It is the confidence that things will be all right. Through their stories, the women describe the various ways in which this sense of trust has filled their lives, and how it has connected them to family, friends and God.

In *Childhood and Society*, Erik Erikson tells us that "the human life cycle and man's institutions have evolved together. . . . The parental faith, which supports the trust emerging in the newborn, has throughout history sought its institutional safeguard . . . in organized religion." The stories told here attest to this mutual evolution.

The women describe life as a struggle. An observer of these women would probably want to know many things about them: How are they able to endure? What sense do they make out of their hard lives? What satisfaction are they able to derive from life? Where do they find comfort? The answers are complex and unique for each woman; each finds meaning and hope in her personal struggles.

STUDY METHOD

Twelve women, ranging in age from 50 to 85, were interviewed for this study. They came to the

Catholic mission at Hope Center in Kingston, Jamaica, each week to receive supplementary food packages. The interviews focused on the roles the women have played throughout life and how those roles have enriched their lives. In particular, the women were asked to consider themselves in their various roles of daughter, sister, wife, and mother. The two central questions were these: From what do you derive life satisfaction? How do you make meaning of your life?

Tapes of the interviews were transcribed and analyzed for common themes. Major themes that emerged were trust in God; connection to family, friends, and church; gratitude to parents for their faith; and strength developed through the hardships of life. This article explores the central theme of trust.

The women in the study were all from poor backgrounds and had little formal education. They had grown up in rural areas of Jamaica and migrated to Kingston as adults. In the interview, the women focused on their memories of childhood and on the trust in God imparted to them by their families. They spoke about the struggles of life and how they had used their faith as a source of strength. They spoke about the satisfaction they derived from their faith. Their trust in God dominated their stories. It is what they chose to tell about; it has shaped their perspective on life.

REMEMBRANCES

The women spoke of childhood days with their families, of growing up surrounded with love. Parents, especially their mothers, were the primary figures in their remembrances.

While reminiscing about her childhood, Unice, age 81, remembered her early life as very pleasant. "I had a lovely mother and father," she said. "They used to be very gentle and kind. . . . They both brought me up in a Christian home."

Mabel, age 83, also spoke of happy childhood days. She had fond memories of growing up in the country: "I was feeling happy because I never knew anything. They took good care of me. . . . So I would never go hungry as a child. . . . And my mother go to church, carry us with her. And send us to Sunday school."

Although most of the women told of hard early lives, they described those lives as happy. Pearl, age 56, stated, "My whole entire family was poor, but we believe in God. And we just content with what we have. We don't have great, but small, and we are contented." Pearl's mother had died in the previous year. "She was a very poor lady," as Pearl said, yet she left a legacy:

My mother died last year. . . . And I miss my mother; I love my mother very much. When my mother is sick, she call and she say, "Oh I am going and I don't have anything to leave with you, but I leave blessing from God with you." The way I treat her, I carry my mother to doctor; I comb my mother's hair; I feed my mother. I do everything. I never one day yet talk a bad word before my mother. So my mother respect me. She is dead and gone, and she leave a blessing here for me, and I feel all right.

ROLES

Although most of these women were also wives, mothers, and grandmothers, they spoke primarily of their roles as daughters and their childhood memories during the interviews. The women expressed strong feelings of love for their parents and a deep sense of gratitude for the Christian faith that their mothers had given them. A pervasive theme was the trust and faith instilled by families. A statement made by Unice summed it up: "I was born and grown in a Christian home. Until now I still keep the faith; I don't refrain from it."

In *Childhood and Society*, Erikson emphasizes the impact of childhood experiences and stresses the importance of "the quality of the maternal relationship" in developing basic trust:

Mothers create a sense of trust in their children . . . and a firm sense of personal trustworthiness within the trusted framework of their culture's lifestyle. This forms the basis in the child for a sense of identity which will later combine a sense of being "all right," of being oneself.

Pearl noted a personal sense of being "all right" during a discussion of her mother's death: "She leave a blessing here for me, and I feel all right."

Trust, as the first of Erikson's "eight ages of man," is fundamental to the rest of development. The gift of trust that a mother gives to her daughter evolves into the strength necessary to survive the struggles of adult life.

HARSH CIRCUMSTANCES

Life in the Kingston ghettos is a struggle for these women, who live in conditions of poverty. They make their homes in wooden shacks or corrugated cardboard boxes, barren except for a table, a few chairs, and mats for beds. Food is usually scarce; they are often unsure how they will find their next meal. Drugs, guns, and violence are all around them.

Mabel, age 83, and Shirley, age 85, have endured this environment for many years. "It's kind of a struggle sometime," Mabel said of her life, "and yet, you know, I fight it." Shirley said, "And I being 85, just 85, I stopped work. . . . Working hard doesn't trouble me. It make me strong."

"Very hard sometime I have life, very hard," was Pearl's description of this difficult existence. However, these women have underlying means of support, including family members, friends, neighbors, and the church. Although unable to provide financial support, their families were connected and caring. "My children," Pearl commented, "would like to give, but they cannot." She turned to God and the church as her sources of strength:

Come here for the food and hope that God give me. I have God in me, I have in my life the fear of God. So I have everything. I have God, so I have everything. It is very comforting. Do you see? And it is like that. I pray regular to God just to help provide for me. You see. So I'm all right.

One of the women, Silvia, age 51, lives with her children. They are poor, but they cope by helping themselves and each other. Silvia described their interdependent relationship this way: "They are really helping themselves. I help myself . . . they take care of me. So that is that; that is that."

Angelica, age 84, has no family. "I have no one but Jesus and good friends," she said. "Sometimes I have nothing to eat, but I believe in Jesus." Her trust in

Jesus and the help of her friends have sufficed to get her through life. Unice summarized the coping process for all the women when she said, "I leave my entire life in the hands of God because he is taking care of me."

In *Aging: The Fulfillment of Life*, Henri J. M. Nouwen and Walter J. Gaffney write that "poverty is the quality of the heart which makes us relate to life . . . as a gift to be shared." The women in this study had transformed their poverty into a sharing of life with family, friends, and God. They were proud of their accomplishments, which helped give their lives meaning.

SOURCES OF SATISFACTION

The struggles the women endured have bonded them to others in relationships based on trust. These relationships have given meaning and hope to their lives and generated life satisfaction in various forms.

Pearl spoke about the satisfaction derived from being provided with the basic needs of life: "My satisfaction is with God because sometime I don't have anything, and God provide for me. Sometime I eat up all my food, and then God provide me the money. You see, I just feel right. Trust in God and I feel all right. God, yes."

Mabel's satisfaction was rooted in the social togetherness that she experienced through prayer and music during church services: "Yes, make me happy when I go to church, and I feel good. . . . We sing and clap and feel happy and feel good."

For other women, like Shirley, life satisfaction meant a temporary safe haven from the woes of the world: "I go to church and I sing and clap and forget problems. So then you go to church and make yourself happy. And all of your problems, you forget them. You focus on Jesus, you see, and then that will carry you through."

The women expressed satisfaction in their relationships with their families and friends, in having

overcome the hardships of life and in maintaining their health and independence. But trust in God and enjoyment of church services dominated their stories. "Yes, the best part of life," Alvira commented. "I don't think anything else better than God."

STRENGTHENED BY TRUST

For the women in this study, the role of daughter had a special significance in their lives. It was from their parents—in particular, from their mothers—that they had learned to trust in God. In *Childhood and Society*, Erikson tells us that "trust born of care is, in fact, the touchstone of the actuality of a given religion."

The women took the faith of their mothers and incorporated it into their lives. In the framework of family connectedness, this trust in God the Provider has helped them deal with the adversities of life. Their life satisfaction stemmed primarily from their trust in God and the strength they derived from that trust.

These twelve poor, elderly Jamaicans, all devout Roman Catholics or Anglicans, had sought out the church to keep them alive physically as well as spiritually. All of them had succeeded in converting the trust given to them by their mothers into the bonds underlying strong relationships with their families, friends, and God. The women struggled to make sense of their hardships, using their trust as a source of strength. They are able to survive in the harsh environment of the Kingston ghettos primarily because of their trust.



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No Easy Transition for International Seminarians

John C. Kemper, S.S., D.Min.

Several years ago, when I was working in a seminary in California, the words of Psalm 136 confronted me in a new way, with an awesome reality:

By the streams of Babylon we sat and wept when we remembered Sion.

On the aspens of that land we hung up our harps, though there our captors asked us for the lyrics of our songs, and our despoilers urged us to be joyful: "Sing for us the songs of Sion!"

How could we sing a song of the Lord in a foreign land?

The psalmist writes of the sense of homesickness the Israelite people experienced during their Babylonian exile. His words, along with a reflection written and read by a young Vietnamese seminary student, inspired this article. The reflection was read during the morning prayer that began our day-long celebration of Tet, the Vietnamese new year. The student told of the beauty of the morning sun rising over the rolling rice fields in Vietnam as the mist lifted from the water. He described the beauty of the people, living in peace. His reflection concluded with a line that echoes in my mind to this day: "It is a beauty of a homeland I may never see again." The chapel was filled with a reverent silence. Each person there felt a solidarity with the student's pain—the same pain

expressed in the words of the psalmist. The pain of homesickness and the need to learn how to live and exist in a foreign land are transgenerational, trans-cultural, and timeless.

SEMINARY AS GLOBAL VILLAGE

Over the past twenty or thirty years, the seminary student body in North America has changed dramatically. No longer is it made up almost exclusively of white middle-class males steeped in a Eurocentric experience of life and theology. Transportation, commerce, and communication have expanded to reach the farthest corners of the world, and our seminary student bodies mirror that expansion. In many locations across the United States and Canada, seminaries have truly become global villages. For example, at the Graduate Theological Union (GTU) in Berkeley, California, international students are 16 percent of the student population. To get an accurate image of the diversity at the GTU, one must also consider those individuals who list their race or ethnicity as Asian American (6 percent), African American (6 percent), or Hispanic (3 percent). In total, according to the *GTU Factbook*, about one-third of the total student population reflects this racial and ethnic diversity.

Seminaries today are being shaped and transformed by their inclusion of many different peoples. The voices of refugees and the oppressed, the voices of women and the marginalized, many from other cultures and countries, are now finding a home within our seminary communities. The seminary provides them a safe “seed bed” in which to germinate, reflect on their experience of life, and prepare for ministry within the new cultural context of their host country. The presence of international students within the seminary community today is a real blessing and grace for both the students and faculty. These foreign-born students also bring many challenges—personal challenges for individual adjustment to the host country, as well as institutional challenges for the seminary as it tries to respond to their needs.

I asked ten international seminary students to share with me their experiences of coming to a foreign land to study theology in preparation for ministry in the United States. Five were born in Poland and are currently students at Saints Cyril and Methodius Seminary in Orchard Lake, Michigan. Five were born in Vietnam and are students at Mount Angel Seminary in Portland, Oregon.

CHALLENGES TO SEMINARY AND STUDENT

In past generations, one became “American” by surrendering one’s ethnic identity, language, and customs and jumping head-first into the American “melting pot.” Today’s immigrants, however, are not so quick to dissociate themselves from their native history. The notion that we can transform our international students into multicultural individuals is a misconception.

A student from Poland returned to his native country for a visit after being in a U.S. seminary for two years. He told me that his family and friends noted subtle changes in his mannerisms—in how he presented himself and in other indirect ways of communicating—that made them feel he was not the same person who had left Poland two years earlier. Once he returned to the United States, he came to realize that the same mannerisms, along with his accent, indicated that he was not American. After that first visit home to Poland, he came to an understanding of his cultural schizophrenia. He was not a multicultural success, as he had been led to believe; rather, he was a cultural hybrid, no longer fully part of his birth culture and not fully a member of the host culture.

ROLES OF SEMINARY

The faculty and administration of the seminary need to respond differently to the international student than to the native-born student, fulfilling four major

roles: midwife, protector of the culture, parent, and mentor in ministry. I believe these four roles are by nature developmental, but not necessarily sequential; they are seldom delineated; and, more often than not, they are ongoing for the life of the individual.

Midwife. The role of the midwife is almost forgotten in modern North American culture. In the past, when birthing was less clinical and often more dangerous, the skills of the midwife were of the utmost importance. The midwife journeyed with the woman in labor, through the pain and tension of the advent of the expected birth. She offered comfort and assurance that the pangs of childbirth would subside with the joy of new life. Likewise, the seminary faculty and administration must be keenly aware of the pain experienced by international students, who have been uprooted and transplanted into a new cultural context.

All too often, the seminary assigns the birthing process a timeline that fails to account for the individuality of each student. One international student told me that others from his own culture in the seminary community were not always helpful to newly arrived international students. He spoke of the sibling-like taunting to which newly arrived international students are subjected by older, more adjusted students, who seem to present their adaptation to the new culture as a gnostic knowledge that the new students lack. All students need to be made aware that they have a responsibility to be a positive influence in the adjustment process of new international students.

Protector of the culture. As Jung Young Lee asserts in his article “Multicultural and Global Theological Scholarship” (*Theological Education*, 1995), the seminary administration should try to secure faculty, spiritual directors, advisors, and mentors with the same cultural or racial backgrounds as the students—men and women who have succeeded in making the adjustment to the new culture. They will serve as role models for students struggling to understand how to live and minister in a foreign land. This is vital for the growth and development of the international student preparing for ministry.

Parent. After the initial culture shock is over and the student begins to adjust to the new environment, the educational community at the seminary takes on the role of parenting. International students require more time from both faculty and formation staff than do native-born students. As a child grows up, he or she learns what is appropriate or inappropriate within a given cultural context. The instructors in this learning and growth process

are many: parents, faith tradition, extended family, friends, teachers, schoolmates, trial and error. When the cultural context changes, however, the learned behavior is not always transferable.

Two examples come to mind—one regarding concepts of time and the other involving permission and abuse of privileges. During my several years in California, I came to understand that there are cultural differences in the understanding of time. I ministered on weekends in a largely Filipino parish south of San Francisco, and to this day I can remember being chastised by an elderly Filipino woman for beginning the 8:00 a.m. mass promptly at 8:00. This seemed strange to me, but it became the gateway to my comprehending the cultural limitations and restrictions we place on our understanding of time. The second example concerns a newly arrived seminary student from Poland who was assigned to work for ten weeks at a church on the East Coast. Upon his arrival, he asked the pastor if he could use the parish phone to call his family in Poland, stating that he would be responsible for the cost. The pastor told the seminarian that he was free to use the parish line to call his family in Poland and that the parish would assume the cost. The first month's phone bill exceeded three hundred dollars. This misuse of a privilege raised two major questions: What percentage was based on language and cultural differences? What percentage simply amounted to one individual taking advantage of another? The incident proved to be a wonderful learning opportunity for the seminary student, the seminarian, and the host parish.

Often, the international student's first perception of life in the United States is that wealth, riches, and comfort abound; he does not see the work and sacrifice required to attain them. Trial-and-error learning becomes an important experience for seminarian, pastor, and seminary alike. The seminary enters into parenting—that is, the teaching of behavioral skills (e.g., use of language, table manners, etiquette, relationship boundaries) appropriate within the new cultural context.

In this role, the seminary and school of theology can also serve to protect and safeguard the cultural heritage of the international student. Often, in the acculturation process, these students' desire to fit into the host culture prompts them to abandon homeland traditions. It is the responsibility of the school to help the international students understand that by keeping the ethnic customs of their past and blending them with the experiences of their new land, they can be true to their cultural identity. This is no easy task for the average school of theology. The institution must incorporate into its calendar time for

the celebration and recognition of the cultural diversity and richness of its student body. The school must also be willing to listen to the legitimate desires of international students to observe special holidays or holy days, and it must be open to ongoing dialogue with these students on a broad array of issues.

Mentor in ministry. In his book *Toward a Theology of Inculturation*, Aylward Shorter defines inculturation as the dynamic ongoing dialogue that takes place between faith and culture. This dialogue is most obviously played out in the area of popular religiosity and cultural practices of the faith. In a recent essay entitled "Communion Within Pluralism in the Local Church," David N. Power, O.M.I., notes the overuse of the word *inculturation* and suggests that we instead use the term *organic progression*, which more fully captures the ongoing growth and development of faith within a given culture.

Organic progression is often most visible in the international seminary student during the initial years of adjustment to the new cultural context. If the academic enterprise of the seminary and the field education program can work closely together to provide experienced mentors for the international student preparing for ministry in the United States or Canada, they will fill a deeply felt lacuna and enable the student to use the potential already present within.

AWARENESS OF CULTURAL DIFFERENCES

A young Asian student had been assigned to a local nursing home to visit the elderly patients. Four weeks into the assignment, he asked for a different field education placement. He informed me that he was getting physically sick every time he had to visit the facility. Coming from a culture that values the elderly as members of the wisdom community, the Asian student saw the nursing home as a cruel storage system for the elderly until their death. His perception of the institution and his difficulty with it as a field education assignment were very much part of his cultural heritage. A well-trained pastoral supervisor would take into consideration the cultural heritage of an international student in mentoring that individual within a field education placement.

The process of inculturation truly is an organic progression for each international student; it does not end with ordination. I believe there is a need to continue the mentoring process throughout the first several years of active ministry. The diocese, religious order, or religious denomination needs to realize that newly ordained or newly missioned ministers from other countries are still in the process of discovering the political, social, and economic realities of their new land

and learning how to incorporate faith into their new cultural context. In the first assignment of such a minister, the senior pastor and the congregational staff must be made aware of the cultural differences and how they can aid in the ongoing formation of their new foreign-born associate.

In the remainder of this article, I quote from the personal journals of the international students I interviewed to illustrate the major challenges they confronted during their theological and pastoral formation in a foreign land. The challenges described by both the Vietnamese and Polish students were almost identical and fell into five categories: language and communication, pluralism, isolation, fear of losing their identity, and the need to rediscern their vocational call.

LANGUAGE AND COMMUNICATION

For almost all the international students, language and communication were among the biggest challenges they faced when they came to the United States. Many admitted knowing little or no English when they arrived. One student from Poland wrote,

You can't imagine how frustrating it is to be in a new cultural environment and not be able to speak the language, to be taken to a large department store knowing what I needed but lacking the ability to communicate with others to explain myself.

Another Polish student expressed it this way:

The inability to speak English correctly was my greatest challenge. I was frustrated and fearful of saying something that was inappropriate or incorrect. Often I can remember making a fool out of myself in my attempt to master the English language.

Communication is more than learning vocabulary and sentence structure in a new language. In many situations the "how" of communication is as important as the intended message. The manner North Americans use in speaking to each other is very different from that used in other parts of the world. One international student from Vietnam wrote,

For me to look at the other person's eyes when having a conversation was very difficult. In my culture, it is not polite to look at the eyes of the other person when you are talking with them. Another cultural adjustment was the practice of shaking hands when greeting another person; in my culture we bow.

In the United States, where eye-to-eye communication expresses honesty and a handshake communicates a warm and friendly greeting or seals an agreement, one can understand the challenges experienced

by the international student. Another student likened his inability with the language to being physically handicapped. He wrote, "I could not understand what was going [on] around me, going to the stores. . . . I felt like not having my right hand."

Several students wrote on how frustrating it was for them to deal with the many levels of adjustment required for a healthy adaptation to a new culture. In many ways, being transplanted into a new cultural context often causes a temporary form of developmental regression. International students often go from being competent students at colleges or universities in their homeland to being ESL (English as a second language) students who can barely express even the most basic and simple needs. The students I interviewed noted that communication involves more than learning vocabulary and sentence structure. Hand in hand with learning the language, they must also learn about the new culture in depth, which takes time. Living and experiencing the culture helps the students understand our day-to-day idioms, many of which have origins in sports and politics (e.g., "cover all the bases," "out in left field," "pork-barrel legislation," "get off the soap box").

Several students paralleled mastery of language skills with their sense of successful acculturation. One student wrote, "During my first summer assignment, I started understanding English which helped me in the positive perception of the cultural and liturgical differences [of life in the United States]." A number of the students noted that having common prayer and liturgy together in their first language was a source of comfort and spiritual nourishment. Being able to reflect on and tell their individual stories in their first language was also important.

PLURALISM EXPERIENCED

For many of the students who come to seminary in the United States and Canada, the pluralism of cultures, ideologies, and theologies within the seminary is a challenge. In the homelands of many of these students, such diversity is not known.

International students must also make dietary adjustments. Many opt to cook in their rooms or go out to eat as they struggle to adjust to the food served at the seminary. One Asian student wrote the following:

One night, I was so happy because I heard that we were going to have rice. I could not wait. Yet, when I came to the cafeteria and I saw the rice that was covered with butter and sugar, I lost my appetite. The Vietnamese people do not cook rice with butter and sugar.

The international students' adjustment in the realm of food is a significant part of their total accultura-

tional development. The failure of the institution to take the dietary needs of these students into consideration may be interpreted as a lack of concern and can hinder their overall adjustment.

The pluralism of theologies and religious expressions also confronts the international student, who often comes from a rather homogeneous educational experience. Both in the United States and Canada, seminaries present various views of theology. A Polish seminarian noted that progressive ideologies in the area of feminism and inclusive language have been a challenge for him in his cultural and liturgical adjustment. International students tend to be very much aware of their reactions to the cultural and theological pluralism they encounter and warn each other against developing an ethnic “ghetto” mentality. They recognize that entrenchment in such a mentality, while it may initially offer a safe haven, can retard the acculturation process.

LOSS OF CULTURAL IDENTITY

Several international students noted that they feared losing their cultural heritage. They expressed the desire to preserve their cultural identity, remain faithful to their birth culture, hold on to the richness of their homeland, and maintain family values and traditions within their new cultural context. One student from Poland wrote,

We are Polish, none of us should ever attempt to become an American, forgetting our culture and roots. If you try to do this [become American] you try to forget where you are from, where is your identity, where is your heritage.

International students often wonder who they are and what they are becoming as they continue to study, live, and minister within their new environment. The struggle for a new cultural identity and the blending of the two cultures happens on both the individual and corporate levels. The individual is struggling with questions of cultural identity and definition: Who am I in this new culture? How do I present myself and my birth culture? These questions are influenced by the corporate identity that the cultural group has within the seminary or the larger community. This external and corporate influence should not be disregarded or ignored in assessing the international student's adjustment to the new host country.

Working at Saints Cyril and Methodius Seminary, where the majority of students are from Poland, I have come to understand that the corporate cultural identity is far greater and has a much more powerful influence on the individual student than one might imagine. It is this corporate cultural identity among

international students that safeguards their native culture, sanctions individuals who seem to be forgetting their cultural heritage, and even ostracizes those who abandon their cultural heritage.

PAINFUL ISOLATION

In their journals, the students related their experience of being far from family, friends, and familiar surroundings. One student from Poland described the pain of being separated from those who had offered support and encouragement throughout his life, “especially my sick grandmother. I experience also [the] lack of my friends from the seminary in Poland as well as other people close to me.”

Others wrote of missing the cities and towns in which they had studied or grown up. A city that is two thousand years old, steeped in folktales, myths, and legends, is radically different from our nation's cities and the overall ethos of life in the United States. Another element that contributes to some students' feeling of isolation is the lack of mass transportation many encounter in this new land. Generally, students from Europe are accustomed to making regular use of public transportation. Without a vehicle, they are isolated and have no means to travel and explore their new environment.

REDISCERNMENT OF VOCATIONAL CALL

Perhaps the most significant challenge for international students is the need to discern again their vocational call within their new cultural context. This requires the students to be open to risk—that is, the risk of discovering that within this new environment, they may not want to continue on their vocational path, or the risk of finding that they are not capable of making the adjustment required for effective ministry in the new cultural context. Within the “doing” of ministry, the international student will encounter new friends, develop new skills, and grow in self-confidence. It will be the new friends, ministry experiences, and congregational voices that either validate the student's ministerial choice or cause the student to look for other vocational avenues.

A Polish student wrote that discernment is much like building a tower on different ground—an analogy inspired by Antoine de Saint-Exupéry's *Citadelle* (1948). He noted that although skills learned from previous building experiences are helpful, this tower will be different in many ways because of the new environment in which it is erected.

Every international student preparing for ministry in the United States must discern again the vocational choice made in his or her homeland. The present

setting will offer building materials: the experiences of the student involved in ministry, the voices of old and new friends, and the voices of congregational and denominational leaders. All of these will determine what the new structure will look like and whether it will endure the test of time.

AN ORGANIC ENTERPRISE

Over the past twenty years, seminaries have struggled with the questions of inculturation and acculturation of foreign-born students. The academic community has defined and redefined terms, identified patterns of behavior, and documented the results. Yet in many ways, the work that has been done has merely scraped the surface. In no way do I mean to make light of the contributions of so many scholars up to the present day; rather, I am suggesting that because the subject is in constant flux, ongoing research is required. We must continually go to the heart of the matter: the individual international student. A newly arrived student from Poland is very different from a student who arrived here from Poland five or ten years ago. The same can be said for students from any other country or cultural group.

International students challenge the seminary to expand its language boundaries and its religious imagination, to explore and understand new sociopolitical and economic systems. They call us to see and name God differently, and in doing so we are enriched. Often they remind us of a simpler way of life and a more familiar relationship with the holy.

The seminary needs to recognize the needs of its foreign-born students and to become a proactive lis-

tener in an ongoing dialogue with them. Definitions of terminology, theories, and patterns of behavior can offer the academic community a false sense of security. The concerns of inculturation and acculturation are made new with the continual changes that occur within the culture itself. The task of ministry formation of international students is truly an organic enterprise.

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(signed) James J. Gill, S.J., M.D., Editor-in-Chief

We Live by Metaphors

Mary Jo Moran, H.M., Ph.D.

As we approach the beginning of the third millennium, it may be advantageous for us, individually and collectively, to examine the metaphors we use to code and organize our perceptions, feelings, thoughts, and actions. These metaphors are the vibrant infrastructures that inform our lives, whether or not we are aware of them. The metaphors we carry within us, whether conscious or unconscious, act as lenses that color our perceptions according to their own assumptions and values. They highlight certain possibilities and conceal others. Nonetheless, it is through these lenses that we view the ever-changing panorama of our experiences in the world. Many of us live our lives with little awareness of the lenses through which we are looking. Our metaphors are, to an extent, our culture's metaphors in microcosm. Everything we think and do bears the distinctive marks of the culture in which we were raised. The basic assumptions and underlying images reflected in our culture dictate our perceptions.

For most of us, metaphors are simply poetic devices rather than attributes of thought or action. However, this restricted view of metaphors is changing. The old paradigm that glorified specialization to such a degree that each field developed its own language—and, consequently, little if any discussion or dialogue occurred among disciplines—is declin-

ing. Today, however, academics and practitioners in many fields are looking to metaphors as they explore, examine, and grapple with their worldviews. This development is opening new doors and channels of understanding and integration that were unthinkable only a decade ago.

METAPHORS CREATE REALITIES

The human thought process is essentially metaphorical, permitting us to concentrate on one aspect of a concept to the often unconscious exclusion of other aspects that are inconsistent with the comparison being made. In addition, metaphors, which are grounded in our physical and cultural experience of the world, influence our thoughts and our actions. Thus, developing an awareness of the metaphors we live by in this culture, as well as reflecting on and then consciously viewing our life through new or different metaphors than those we usually live by, is critical for the cultivation of a metaphorical imagination—a crucial skill in creating rapport and communicating unshared experience, as well as in becoming flexible about adjusting our worldview. It is critical to realize that the way our culture has conditioned us to perceive our world is not the only way. In addition, it is essential to see beyond the “realities”

of our culture. In their book *Metaphors We Live By*, George Lakoff (professor of linguistics at the University of California, Berkeley) and Mark Johnson (professor of philosophy at Southern Illinois University, Carbondale) maintain that “metaphors may create realities for us, especially social realities. A metaphor may thus be a guide for future actions. Such actions will, of course, fit the metaphor. This will, in turn, reinforce the power of the metaphor to make experience coherent. In this sense metaphors can be self-fulfilling prophecies.”

Gareth Morgan, international consultant and author of *Images of Organization*, uses the notion of a psychic prison to describe the unconscious, covert metaphor that controls how we see and act in a particular organization. Because it is not known to us, we are not aware of how it controls us. The concept of the psychic prison allows us to see that while organizations may be socially constructed realities, paradigms are often ascribed a life and power of their own that allow them to exercise a degree of authority over their creators. Morgan’s metaphor of the psychic prison causes us to reflect on the power of our own covert processes and points to the importance of making them overt for ourselves. It promotes the value of critical thinking and, as he writes, “provides the impetus for critical analysis . . . that may allow us to understand and cope with the significance and consequences of our actions in a more informed way.”

Social scientists have long recognized models as expressions of things they hope to understand in terms of other things that they think they already understand. In *The Fifth Discipline*, Peter Senge, director of the Center for Organizational Learning at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology’s Sloan School of Management, explains that “the discipline of working with mental models starts with turning the mirror inward: learning to unearth our internal pictures of the world, to bring them to the surface and hold them rigorously to scrutiny. It also includes the ability to carry on ‘learningful’ conversations that balance inquiry and advocacy, where people expose their own thinking effectively and make that thinking open to the influence of others.” These mental models are active; they shape how we act. In fact, new insights are often aborted before they are put into practice because they clash with deeply held internal concepts of how the world works—concepts that limit us to habitual ways of thinking and acting.

Social scientists employ the metaphor of a system to study a very complex phenomenon: the organization. Like metaphors, a systems view looks at the world in terms of relationships and integration. It facilitates the development of an overall framework

that synthesizes the various facets involved in understanding a system. In addition, a systems model helps us to identify and analyze the major forces and variables, both in the external environment and in the system, that influence how and why the system acts as it does.

What is true about metaphors is also true of the system views we carry within us. These models often unconsciously control not only what we see but also how we think about what we see. By examining the overt and covert metaphors that surround an organization, we can detect what systems theory or theories are operating in that organization. In addition, the prisms through which we see organizations will determine not only how we perceive the organization but also, to a large degree, what course of action we might recommend.

CONSEQUENCES OF FLAWED METAPHORS

In religious institutes, metaphors abound in the ordinary speech of both leaders and members. If we listen carefully, we may find that the same metaphors are used to express the best and worst aspects of the institute. Since metaphors are ingrained models of reality that determine how we see our world and understand our place within it, they can lead to unrealistic expectations, poor choices, and emotional anxiety if they are flawed or outdated. When we alter a core or guiding metaphor, decisive changes in our perceptions, feelings, and behavior follow. For example, we as a culture are in the process of changing our fundamental metaphor for organizations as we approach the next millennium. Moving from the long-standing model of the organization as a machine to its polar opposite—a model of the organization as a living system—social scientists look to biology for lenses through which to see and, consequently, to act. The machine metaphor met our needs for a long time but no longer does today. However, the living-organism metaphor does not yet undergird our thinking about and acting in organizations. We are betwixt and between.

If a group is able to identify and agree on the current core metaphor of its religious institute, the congregation’s transformation can begin. Even the simple act of bringing the metaphor into the group’s consciousness can produce significant change, because awareness is a precursor of thoughtful action. Often, though, an outsider is needed to help the group identify the guiding metaphors it employs, because members are too intricately connected to the institute and thus may fail to hear the obvious. However, new members, like outside consultants, have fresh ears. It is interesting that a congregation’s core

metaphors are often replicated by employees in the corporate works of the institute. These metaphors are most certainly part of the legacy the organization acquired from its sponsors.

CONGREGATION AS ORGANISM

A religious institute, like a living system, exists in and with its wider environment. As an open system, the organism must be able, in Morgan's words, "to scan and sense changes in task and contextual environments, . . . to bridge and manage critical boundaries and areas of interdependence and . . . to develop appropriate strategic responses." Engaged in a continuous exchange with its environment, a congregation, like an organism, must be focused on self-maintenance and self-organization. It certainly must also be process-adaptive, with an emphasis on relationships rather than parts. When engaged with its environment, the religious institute, like other organizations, monitors environmental changes and initiates appropriate responses. Intrinsic to the metaphor of congregation as organism are interdependence, a complex web of relations, a valuing of diversity, and a recognition of more than one truth, as well as a fundamental belief in the principle of equifinality (i.e., that the final state or condition may be reached from different initial conditions and in diverse ways). As Morgan writes, "structure, function, behavior and all other features of system operation are closely intertwined"; interconnection, diversity, integration, and differentiation are all critical.

Lacking self-sufficiency, the organization as living organism exists as an element in an ecosystem. The concept of homeostasis (i.e., the capacity to perpetuate conditions for survival in a changing environment), with its affiliated principles of negative and positive feedback, acts as a means of regulation and control for the organism. The living-organism paradigm upholds the integration of both the human and technical aspects of the organization. "Both/and" rather than "either/or" thinking prevails. Change is not quantitative but qualitative. The new and different emerge because the organism embodies not only an ongoing force to enhance, change, and adapt, but also one to maintain the status quo.

Applying some of this thinking about metaphors to organizations, Morgan contends that "organizations can be many things at one and the same time." In addition, he writes, "there is a close relationship between the way we think and the way we act, and . . . many organizational problems are embedded in our thinking." Morgan suggests that the different metaphors of an organization raise "a host of different questions about the nature of the organization."

He also proposes that particular images lead us to diverse lenses through which we view and think about organizations. "Images and metaphors are not just interpretive constructs used in the task of analysis," he notes. "They are central to the process of *imagization*, through which people enact or 'write' the character of organizational life." As Senge writes in *The Fifth Discipline*, "Systems thinking is a conceptual framework, a body of knowledge and tools that have been developed over the past fifty years, to make the full patterns clearer, and to help us see how to change them effectively."

GRASPING A NEW CORE METAPHOR

We cannot embrace a new core metaphor unless we let go of the old. The new metaphor cannot be figured out; rather, it is suddenly seen. It attests to the presence and power of the intuitive. Marilyn Ferguson, author of *The Aquarian Conspiracy*, believes that a core metaphor "involves a principle that was present all along but unknown to us. It includes the old as a partial truth, . . . while allowing for things to work in other ways as well. By its larger perspective, it transforms traditional knowledge and the stubborn new observations, reconciling their apparent contradictions."

The importance of reframing problems so as to create more possible and varied solutions cannot be stressed enough. However, we need to be aware that any solutions to problems that require a fundamental reframing of a social system's logic are apt to meet with resistance from the system; people are both emotionally and intellectually attached to their community's metaphors.

This is obvious in the post-Vatican II renewal efforts of religious institutes, which have sparked serious criticism from both within and without. Critics still point to the fundamental change in metaphor from pre-Vatican II to post-Vatican II as the reason for the "decline" of religious life today. However, if we remember Einstein's observation that we cannot solve a problem from the same consciousness that created it, we will realize that we need to step back and find a new vantage point or a new core metaphor to assist us in transforming today's congregational reality.

The complexity of change today requires that multiple interrelated and discontinuous changes must be made rather than one or two self-contained changes. The changes required in religious life today, at both the individual and organizational level, are far deeper and more fundamental than previously imagined. To name just a few of the significant reframing efforts we must all make today: We must change our fundamental stance from constancy to continual

adaptation; shift from viewing change as disturbance to viewing change as customary; move from a single reality to multiple realities, from one right explanation to multiple possible solutions, from individuality and competition to cooperation and collaboration, from analysis to synthesis, from hierarchical structures to flexible organic systems, from leaders who are superiors to leaders who are servants, and from a national approach to a global outlook. Each of these reframes bespeaks the interlocking, overlapping, and interdependent nature of them all.

COLLABORATION ESSENTIAL

At the individual level, members must be asked to let go of behaviors that are part of their sense of self but that are connected to former metaphors. Edwin Nevis, Joan Lancourt, and Helen Vassallo, consultants in the field of organizational management, believe cooperation and collaboration require members "to be open to new ideas, to have the ability to relate to and respect others whose knowledge and points of view differ from their own, to value these differences, and to refrain from trying to eliminate them." In their book *Intentional Revolutions: A Seven-Point Strategy for Transforming Organizations*, they point out that cooperation and collaboration necessitate listening actively, postponing judgment, pursuing synergy and connection, enthusiastically building on the ideas of others, searching for and being open to deeper understanding, recognizing the abilities of others, cultivating the success of others, knowing how to participate in constructive conflict, being unaffected by creative tensions and ambiguity, and undertaking the challenge of developing shared understandings. Surely, acquiring competence and comfortableness with these new skills is challenging for each of us. To complicate matters, the behaviors related to the new metaphors do not yet exist to replace the old ones. Finally, no experience accessible to us has involved changes of this magnitude.

A congregation's reality consists of a combination of tangible and intangible factors that make up the members' experience of the congregation and in one way or another shape or reshape their behavior. Needless to say, this congregational reality is composed of multiple realities, or several simultaneously

existing metaphors or worldviews. Since the acceptance of a new metaphor by members involves the creation of a new congregational reality, implementation requires the resocialization of members, which entails their internalization of new assumptions, values, norms, roles, and behaviors. What emerges over time is a shared understanding of what matters; then the new behavior becomes habitual and predictable.

Part of the difficulty of making such a change is that the acceptance of a new metaphor represents not simply a modification of the prevailing one but the acceptance of a contradictory one. It also requires fundamentally changing the whole, not just some of the parts. Fortunately, the new science offers us metaphors that demonstrate that continuous, significant change is not only possible but also a normal part of life. It could be said that our core, guiding metaphors, not human nature, resist change. However, this is not to say that organizational realities are easy to change. Clearly, these core metaphors are self-sustaining, and members become emotionally attached to the way things are. A guiding metaphor is perpetuated by community agreement that it represents the way things should be.

RECOMMENDED READING

- Ferguson, M. *The Aquarian Conspiracy*. Los Angeles, California: Tarcher, 1980.
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- Morgan, G. *Images of Organization*. Newbury Park, California: Sage, 1986.
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BOOK REVIEWS

The New Men: Inside the Vatican's Elite School for American Priests by Brian Murphy. New York, New York: Grosset/Putnam, 1997. 293 pp. \$25.95.

Brian Murphy's *The New Men: Inside the Vatican's Elite School for American Priests* is a welcome remedy for some of the church's recent "bad press." Discouraged by the seemingly unrelenting stream of recent clerical scandals? Then read this well-written, thoughtful, and encouraging book. Its honest and at times gripping account of six very human young seminarians and their struggles and accomplishments during their first year at Rome's North American College will restore your faith.

The book is a delightful surprise. Picking it up for the first time, you might chance predicting its contents. Be careful; page by page, the author will prove you wrong. Murphy helps us to see the priesthood through the eyes of men whose rector, Monsignor Timothy Dolan, offers each of them this challenge at the outset of their seminary years: Configure yourself to Christ.

Inspiring in many ways, the book reminds us that the process of religious formation is a spiritual journey, not a professional one. Yes, the "new men" need to learn the practical tasks that make up the life of a priest. More important, though, they must surrender to the same uncertainty, frustration, pain, and periodic moments of consolation experienced by anyone who has the courage to become involved with God.

The six students whom Murphy chooses as his main characters are an attractive group; their journeys are varied and interesting. Take Gary Benz, for example. Here we have a young man from the farmlands of North Dakota, homesick and struggling with the perplexing choice between diocesan priesthood and Benedictine life. Chris Nalty, a successful attorney from Louisiana with a love of good cigars and some

of the finer things in life, spends considerable time questioning seriously his ability to commit himself to a life of celibate chastity. He is surprised eventually to discover that prayer really is a help in this regard.

Then there are the Landry twins, Scott and Roger, both Harvard graduates, studying for two different dioceses but with a growing desire to serve together in one. We also get an opportunity to follow the fascinating journey of Tam Tran from Saigon to the seminary in Rome, as well as former U.S. Air Force pilot Brian Christiansen's struggle between the priesthood and his love for a woman he met just prior to coming to Rome.

Set as it is in the city of Rome, *The New Men* gives us a glimpse of just how that venue helps give these seminarians a lesson about the universality of the church, with all its strengths and weaknesses. The seminary staff, from spiritual director Reverend Cornelius McRae to psychiatrist Reverend Jon O'Brien, S.J., come through as very human and believable. They don't have all the answers for the questions posed by those in their charge but are willing to push them gently toward greater honesty and self-understanding. Topics such as sexuality, church politics, and the tension that exists between ambition and gospel mandates such as self-emptying are treated forthrightly and sensitively.

This book will be a helpful resource for vocation promoters and for young people considering priesthood or religious life as a vocation, as well as a useful tool for educating parents about a call to these ways of life in today's church. Some readers may be disappointed that the author fails to address some issues currently being debated in regard to Roman Catholic priesthood. Topics such as the possibility of a married clergy or the ordination of women, for example, receive no attention. The book's purpose, however, is not to analyze the many and varied opinions on these and other topics associated with contemporary priesthood. Rather, Murphy sets out to tell us the story of six men who have the courage to explore whether or not they have a call from God to serve the church as priests. In this undertaking, the author succeeds admirably.

Sean D. Sammon, F.M.S.

My Brother Joseph: The Spirit of a Cardinal and the Story of a Friendship by Eugene Kennedy. New York, New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997. 175 pp. \$17.95.

Writing a memoir about friendship is a tricky endeavor. Events and conversations, times of consolation and alienation, moments of intimacy—all those elements that go into making up the best of relationships—are suddenly on display. Living through them, you somehow thought they would never catch the light of day. Now they are out there for all to see. Eugene Kennedy's poignant and inspiring tale about his friendship of more than thirty years with Joseph Bernardin, the late archbishop of Chicago, convinces us that it is worth the risk to share the details about these precious relationships. Anyone who has ever had a best friend will cherish this book.

My Brother Joseph, however, is much more than the tale of a friendship between two men. The book also provides us with an understanding about how Bernardin grew into a much-admired and loved churchman who provided energetic and visionary leadership to the Archdiocese of Chicago and the church in the United States.

Kennedy's book begins in 1967, when the newly formed Conference of Catholic Bishops, led by John Dearden of Detroit, commissioned a study of priests in the United States. Kennedy, a well-known priest/psychologist at the time, was a member of the scholarly team assembled for the project. Bernardin, then referred to as the "boy bishop," was the Conference's mediator for the project. Both men were the same age. In the natural and unpredictable ways that most friendships get under way, the one between Kennedy and Bernardin came to birth.

Soon thereafter, Bernardin was named general secretary of the Bishops' Conference. His task was formidable: to get bishops, who for years had worked independently, to operate collegially. One has only to review the Conference membership list in the late

1960s to recognize some strong personalities and to realize just how challenging was the mandate given to Bernardin.

Kennedy helps us appreciate that Bernardin was neither a dealmaker nor a crafter of compromises; he was instead a genuine consensus builder. His genius as a leader lay in his ability to maintain that delicate balance between loyalty to the institution and respect for the person. Bernardin also refused to typecast people. This capacity helped him work effectively with fellow bishops holding different points of view and was but one of the gifts he used eventually to produce the U.S. bishops' pastoral letter on war and peace.

Most memorable in Kennedy's book, however, is the very human person who emerges in its pages. We see Bernardin in those unguarded moments that we all have with good friends—moments when, free of self-censorship, we say exactly what's on our mind. We also are privileged to witness the growth of his ever-deepening spirituality. One must believe that his hour of personal prayer each day, his love of the Eucharist, and his lifelong struggle to empty himself and rely totally on Jesus were essential ingredients in his ability to withstand with dignity and grace the terrible ordeal of a false accusation of sexual abuse and the cancer that eventually took his life.

The friend that Kennedy had in Bernardin was no plaster saint. Yes, he was ambitious. While still Archbishop of Cincinnati, for example, he confided to Kennedy that he would very much like to head the Chicago archdiocese. While tolerant of others, their idiosyncratic behavior was not lost on him. He cloaked his reactions to these annoyances, however, in subtle humor.

Kennedy has done us an enormous favor in sharing with us his years of friendship with Bernardin. We come away from this book convinced that God did have a dream for Joseph Bernardin and that this exceptional man spent his life discerning just what that dream was about and living it out fully. Each step along the way helped make him what he was at the end: an extraordinary leader, a compassionate pastor, a dear friend. Simply put, he was the very best of men.

Sean D. Sammon, F.M.S.